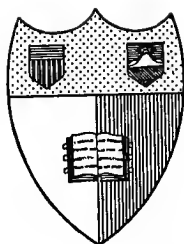


AN INCIDENT
AND
OTHER
HAPPENINGS



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[Page 17

“ ‘YOU'RE HANGING YOURSELF, BOY,’ THE SHERIFF SAID ”

AN INCIDENT and Other Happenings

By

SARAH BARNWELL ELLIOTT

Author of

"The Durket Sperret" "Jerry" etc.

With Illustrations by

W.T. Smedley



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TO

The Memory of

MY MOTHER

CHARLOTTE BULL BARNWELL ELLIOTT

CONTENTS

	PAGE
AN INCIDENT	3
MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL	43
FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS.	61
AN EX-BRIGADIER.	87
SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS	123
WITHOUT THE COURTS	149
MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW	163
BALDY	253

ILLUSTRATIONS

- 'YOU'RE HANGING YOURSELF, BOY,' THE SHERIFF SAID " *Frontispiece*
MORRIS, STANDING OVER HIS FALLEN FOE, LOOKED
ABOUT HIM AS IF DAZED" *Facing p. 34*

AN INCIDENT

AN INCIDENT

It was an ordinary frame house standing on brick legs, and situated on a barren knoll, which, because of the dead level of marsh and swamp and deserted fields from which it rose, seemed to achieve the loneliness of a real height. The south and west sides of the house looked out on marsh and swamp; the north and east sides on a wide stretch of old fields grown up in broom-grass. Beyond the marsh rolled a river, now quite beyond its banks with a freshet; beyond the swamp, which was a cypress swamp, rose a railway embankment leading to a bridge that crossed the river. On the other two sides the old fields ended in a solid black wall of pine-barren. A roadway led from the house through the broom-grass to the barren, and at the beginning of this road stood an out-house, also on brick legs, which, save for a small stable, was the sole out-building. One end of this house was a kitchen, the other was divided into two rooms for servants. There were some shattered remnants of oak-trees out in the field, and some chimneys

AN INCIDENT

overgrown with vines, showing where in happier times the real homestead had stood.

It was towards the end of February; a clear afternoon drawing towards sunset; and all the flat, sad country was covered with a drifting red glow that turned the field of broom-grass into a sea of gold; that lighted up the black wall of pine-barren, and shot, here and there, long shafts of light into the sombre depths of the cypress swamp. There was no sign of life about the dwelling-house, though the doors and windows stood open; but every now and then a negro woman came out of the kitchen and looked about, while within a dog whined.

Shading her eyes with her hand, this woman would gaze across the field towards the ruin; then down the road; then, descending the steps, she would walk a little way towards the swamp and look along the dam that, ending the yard on this side, led out between the marsh and the swamp to the river. The over-full river had backed up into the yard, however, and the line of the dam could now only be guessed by the wall of solemn cypress-trees that edged the swamp. Still, the woman looked in this direction many times, and also towards the railway embankment, from which a path led towards the house, crossing the head of the swamp by a bridge made of two felled trees.

But look as she would, she evidently did not find what she sought, and muttering "Lawd! Lawd!" she returned to the kitchen, shook the

AN INCIDENT

tied dog into silence, and seating herself near the fire gazed sombrely into its depths. A covered pot hung from the crane over the blaze, making a thick bubbling noise, as if what it contained had boiled itself almost dry, and a coffee-pot on the hearth gave forth a pleasant smell. The woman from time to time turned the spit of a tin kitchen wherein a fowl was roasting, and moved about the coals on the top of a Dutch oven at one side. She had made preparation for a comfortable supper, and evidently for others than herself.

She went again to the open door and looked about, the dog springing up and following to the end of his cord. The sun was nearer the horizon now, and the red glow was brighter. She looked towards the ruin; looked along the road; came down the steps and looked towards the swamp and the railway path. This time she took a few steps in the direction of the house; looked up at its open windows, at the front door standing ajar, at a pair of gloves and a branch from the vine at the ruin, that lay on the top step of the piazza, as if in passing one had put them there, intending to return in a moment. While she looked the distant whistle of a locomotive was heard echoing back and forth about the empty land, and the rumble of an approaching train. She turned a little to listen, then went hurriedly back to the kitchen.

The rumbling sound increased, although the speed was lessened as the river was neared.

AN INCIDENT

Very slowly the train was moving, and the woman, peeping from the window, watched a gentleman get off and begin the descent of the path.

"Mass Johnnie!" she said. "Lawd! Lawd!" and again seated herself by the fire until the rapid, firm footstep having passed, she went to the door, and standing well in the shadow, watched.

Up the steps the gentleman ran, pausing to pick up the gloves and the bit of vine. The negro groaned. Then in at the open door, "Nellie!" he called, "Nellie!"

The woman heard the call, and going back quickly to her seat by the fire, threw her apron over her head.

"Abram!" was the next call; then, "Aggie!"

She sat quite still, and the master, running up the kitchen steps and coming in at the door, found her so.

"Aggie?"

"Yes, suh."

"Why didn't you answer me?"

The veiled figure rocked a little from side to side.

"What the mischief is the matter?" walking up to the woman and pulling the apron from over her face. "Where is your Miss Nellie?"

"I dun'no', suh; but yo' supper is ready, Mass Johnnie."

"Has your mistress driven anywhere?"

"De horse in de stable, suh." The woman now

AN INCIDENT

rose as if to meet a climax, but her eyes were still on the fire.

"Did she go out walking?"

"Dis mawnin', suh."

"This morning!" he repeated, slowly, wonderingly, "and has not come back yet?"

The woman began to tremble, and her eyes, shining and terrified, glanced furtively at her master.

"Where is Abram?"

"I dun'no', suh!" It was a gasping whisper.

The master gripped her shoulder, and with a maddened roar he cried her name—"Aggie!"

The woman sank down. Perhaps his grasp forced her down. "'Fo' Gawd!" she cried—"fo' Gawd, Mass Johnnie, I dun'no'!" holding up beseeching hands between herself and the awful glare of his eyes. "I'll tell you, suh, Mass Johnnie, I'll tell you!" crouching away from him. "Miss Nellie gimme out dinner en supper, den she put on she hat en gone to de ole chimbley en git some de brier what grow dey. Den she come back en tell Abram fuh git a bresh broom en sweep de ya'd. Lemme go, Mass Johnnie, please, suh, en I tell you better, suh. En Abram teck de hatchet en gone to'des de railroad fuh cut de bresh. 'Fo' Gawd, Mass Johnnie, it's de trute, suh! Den I tell Miss Nellie say de chicken is all git out de coop, en she say I muss ketch one fuh unner supper, suh; en I teck de dawg en gone in de fiel' fuh look fuh de chicken. En I see Miss Nellie put 'e glub en de brier on de step,

AN INCIDENT

en walk to'des de swamp, like 'e was goin' on de dam—'kase de water ent rise ober de dam den—en den I gone in de broom-grass en I run de chicken, en I ent ketch one tay I git clean ober to de woods. En when I come back de glub is layin' on de step, en de brier, des like Miss Nellie leff um—" She stopped and her master straightened himself.

"Well," he said, and his voice was strained and weak.

The servant once more flung her apron over her head, and broke into violent crying. "Dat's all, Mass Johnnie! dat's all! I dun'no' wey Abram is gone; I dun'no' what Abram is do! Nobody ent been on de place dis day—dis day but me—but me! Oh, Lawd! oh, Lawd en Gawd!"

The master stood as if dazed. His face was drawn and gray, and his breath came in awful gasps. A moment he stood so, then he strode out of the house. With a howl the dog sprang forward, snapping the cord, and rushed after his master.

The woman's cries ceased, and without moving from her crouching position she listened with straining ears to the sounds that reached her from the stable. In a moment the clatter of horses' hoofs going at a furious pace swept by, then a dead silence fell. The intense quiet seemed to rouse her, and going to the door, she looked out. The glow had faded, and the gray mist was gathering in distinct strata above the marsh and the river. She went out and looked about her

AN INCIDENT

as she had done so many times during that long day. She gazed at the water that was still rising; she peered cautiously behind the stable and under the houses; she approached the wood-pile as if under protest, gathered some logs into her arms and an axe that was lying there; then turning towards the kitchen, she hastened her steps, looking back over her shoulder now and again, as if fearing pursuit. Once in the kitchen she threw down the wood and barred the door; she shut the boarded window-shutter, fastening it with an iron hook; then leaning the axe against the chimney, she sat down by the fire, muttering, "If dat nigger come sneakin' back yer now, I'll split 'e haid open, *sho*."

Recovering a little from her panic, she was once more a cook, and swung the crane from over the fire, brushed the coals from the top of the Dutch-oven, and pushed the tin kitchen farther from the blaze. "Mass Johnnie 'll want sump'h'n to eat some time dis night," she said; then, after a pause, "en I gwine eat *now*." She got a plate and cup, and helped herself to hominy out of the pot, and to a roll out of the oven; but though she looked at the fowl she did not touch it, helping herself instead to a goodly cup of coffee. So she ate and drank with the axe close beside her, now and then pausing to groan and mutter—"Po' Mass Johnnie!—po' Mass Johnnie!—Lawd! Lawd!—if Miss Nellie had er sen' Abram atter dat chicken—like I tell um—Lawd!" shaking her head the while.

AN INCIDENT

Through the gathering dusk John Morris galloped at the top speed of his horse. Reaching the little railway station, he sprang off, throwing the reins over a post, and strode in.

"Write this telegram for me, Green," he said ; "my hand trembles."

"To SAM PARTIN, *Sheriff, Pineville* :

"My wife missing since morning. Negro, Abram Washington, disappeared. Bring men and dogs. Get off night train this side of bridge. Will be fire on the path to mark the place. JOHN MORRIS."

"Great God !" the operator said, in a low voice. "I'll come too, Mr. Morris."

"Thank you," John Morris answered. "I am going to get the Wilson boys, and Rountree and Mitchell," and for the first time the men's eyes met. Determined, deadly, sombre, was the look exchanged ; then Morris went away.

None of the men whom Morris summoned said much, nor did they take long to arm themselves, saddle, and mount, and by nine o'clock Aggie heard them come galloping across the field ; then her master's voice calling her. There was little time in which to make the signal-fire on the railroad embankment, and to cut lightwood into torches, even though there were many hands to do the work. John Morris's dog followed him a part of the way to the wood-pile, then turned aside to where the water had crept up from the swamp into the yard. Aggie saw the dog, and spoke to Mr. Morris.

AN INCIDENT

"Dat's de way dat dawg do dis mawnin', Mass Johnnie, an' when I gone to ketch de chicken, Miss Nellie was walkin' to'des dat berry place."

An irresistible shudder went over John Morris, and one of the gentlemen standing near asked if he had a boat.

"The bateau was tied to that stake this morning," Mr. Morris answered, pointing to a stake some distance out in the water; "but I have another boat in the top of the stable." Every man turned to go for it, showing the direction of their fears, and launched it where the log bridge crossed the head of the swamp, and where now the water was quite deep.

The whistle was heard at the station, and the rumble of the on-coming train. The fire flared high, lighting up the group of men standing about it, booted and belted with ammunition-belts, quiet, and white, and determined.

Many curious heads looked out as the sheriff and his men—six men besides Green from the station—got off; then the train rumbled away in the darkness towards the surging, turbulent river, and the crowd moved towards the house.

Mr. Morris told of his absence in town on business. That Abram had been hired first as a field-hand; and that later, after his marriage, he had taken Abram from the field to look after his horse and to do the heavier work about the house and yard.

"And the woman Aggie is trustworthy?"

"I am sure of it; she used to belong to us."

AN INCIDENT

"Abram is a strange negro?"

"Yes."

Then Aggie was called in to tell her story. Abram had taken the hatchet and had gone towards the railroad for brush to make a broom. She had taken the dog and gone into the broom-grass to catch a fowl; and the last she had seen of her mistress she was walking towards the dam, which was then above the water.

"How long were you gone after the chicken?"

"I dun'no', suh; but I run um clean to the woods 'fo' I ketch um, en I walked back slow 'kase I tired."

"Were you gone an hour?"

"I spec so, suh, 'kase when I done ketch de chicken I stop fuh pick up some lightwood I see wey Abram been cuttin' wood yistiddy."

"And your mistress was not here when you came back—nor Abram?"

"No, suh, nobody; en 'e wuz so lonesome I come en look in dis house fuh Miss Nellie, but 'e ent deyyer; en I look in de bush fuh Abram, but I ent see um nudder. En de dawg run to de water en howl en ba'k en ba'k tay I tie um up in de kitchen."

"And was the boat tied to the stake this morning?"

"Yes, suh; en when I been home long time en git scare, den I look en see de boat gone."

"You don't think that your mistress got in the boat and drifted away by accident?"

AN INCIDENT

"No, suh, nebber, suh; Miss Nellie 'fraid de water lessen Mass Johnnie is wid um."

"Is Abram a good boy?"

"I dun'no', suh; I dun'no' nuttin' 'tall 'bout Abram, suh; Abram is strange nigger to we."

"Did he take his things out of his room?"

"Abram t'ings? Ki! Abram ent hab nuttin' ceppen what Miss Nellie en Mass Johnnie gi'um. No, suh, dat nigger ent hab nuttin' but de close on 'e back when 'e come to we."

The sheriff paused a moment. "I think, Mr. Morris," he said, at last, "that we'd better separate. You, with Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Rountree, had better take your boat and hunt in the swamp and marsh, and along the river-bank. Let Mr. Wilson, his brothers, and Green take your dog and search in the pine-barren. I'll take my men and my dogs and cross the railroad. The signal of any discovery will be three shots fired in quick succession. The gathering-place 'll be this house, where a member of the discovering party 'll meet the other parties and bring 'em to the discovery. And I beg that you'll refrain from violence, at least until we can reach each other. We've no proof of anything—"

"Damn proof!"

"An' our only clew," the sheriff went on, "the missing boat, points to Mrs. Morris's safety." A little consultation ensued; then agreeing to the sheriff's distribution of forces, they left the house.

The sheriff's dogs—the lean, small hounds used

AN INCIDENT

on such occasions—were tied and he held the ropes. There was an anxious look on his face, and he kept his dogs near the house until the party for the barren had mounted and ridden away, and the party in the boat had pushed off into the blackness of the swamp, a torch fastened at the prow casting weird, uncertain shadows. Then ordering his six men to mount and to lead his horse, he went to the room of the negro Abram and got an old shirt. The two lean little dogs were restless, but they made no sound as he led them across the railway. Once on the other side, he let them smell the shirt, and loosed them, and was about to mount, when, in the flash of a torch, he saw something in the grass.

"A hatchet!" he said to his companions, picking it up; "and clean, thank God!"

The men looked at each other, then one said, slowly, "He coulder drowned her?"

The sheriff did not answer, but followed the dogs that had trotted away with their noses to the ground.

"I'm sure the nigger came this way," the sheriff said, after a while. "Those others may find the poor young lady, but I feel sure of the nigger."

One of the men stopped short. "That nigger's got to die," he said.

"Of course," the sheriff answered, "but not by Judge Lynch's court. This circuit's got a judge that'll hang him lawfully."

"I b'lieve Judge More will," the recalcitrant

AN INCIDENT

admitted, and rode on. "But," he added, "if I know Mr. John Morris, that nigger's safe to die one way or another."

They rode more rapidly now, as the dogs had quickened their pace. The moon had risen, and the riding, for men who hunted recklessly, was not bad. Through woods and across fields, over fences and streams, down by-paths and old roads, they followed the little dogs.

"We're makin' straight for the next county," the sheriff said.

"We're makin' straight for the old Powis settlement," was answered. "Nothin' but niggers have lived there since the war, an' that nigger's there, I'll bet."

"That's so," the sheriff said. "About how many niggers live there?"

"There ain't more than half a dozen cabins left now. We can easy manage that many."

It was a long rough ride, and in spite of their rapid pace it was some time after midnight before they saw the clearing where clustered the few cabins left of the plantation quarters of a well-known place, which in its day had yielded wealth to its owners. The moon was very bright, and, save for the sound of the horses' feet, the silence was intense.

"Look sharp," the sheriff said; "that nigger ain't sleepin' much if he's here, and he might try to slip off."

The dogs were going faster now, and yelping a little.

AN INCIDENT

"Keep up, boys!" and the sheriff spurred his horse.

In a few minutes they thundered into the little settlement, where the dogs were already barking and leaping against a close-shut door. Frightened black faces began to peer out. Low exclamations and guttural ejaculations were heard as the armed men scattered, one to each cabin, while the sheriff hammered at the door where the dogs were jumping.

"It's the sheriff!" he called, "come to get Abram Washington. Bring him out and you kin go back to your beds. We're all armed, and nobody need to try runnin'."

The door opened cautiously, and an old negro looked out. "Abram's my son, Mr. Partin," he said, "an' 'fo' Gawd he ent yer."

"No lyin', old man; the dogs brought us straight here. Don't make me burn the house down; open the door."

The door was closing when the sheriff, springing from his horse, forced it steadily back. A shot came from within, but it ranged wild, and in an instant the sheriff's pistol covered the one room, where a smouldering fire gave light. Two of the men followed him, and one, making for the fire, pushed it into a blaze, which revealed a group of negroes—an old man, a young woman, some children, and a young man crouching behind with a gun in his hand. The sheriff walked straight up to the young man, whose teeth were chattering.

AN INCIDENT

"I arrest you," he said; "come on."

"That's the feller," confirmed one of the guard; "I've seen him at Mr. Morris's place."

"Tie him," the sheriff ordered, "while I get that gun. Give it to me, old man, or I'll take you to jail, too." It was yielded up—an old-time rifle—and the sheriff smashed it against the side of the chimney, throwing the remnants into the fire. "Lead on," he said, and the young negro was taken outside. Quickly he was lifted on to a horse and tied there, while the former rider mounted behind one of his companions, and they rode out of the settlement into the woods.

"Git into the shadows," one said; "they might be fools enough to shoot."

Once in the road, the sheriff called a halt. "One of you must ride back to Mr. Morris's place and collect the other search-parties, while we make for Pineville jail. Now, Abram, come on."

"I ent done nuttin', Mr. Partin, suh," the negro urged. "I ent hot Mis' Morris."

"Who said anything 'bout Mrs. Morris?" was asked, sharply.

The negro groaned.

"You're hanging yourself, boy," the sheriff said; "but since you know, where *is* Mrs. Morris?"

"I dun'no', suh."

"Why did you run away?"

"'Kase I 'fraid Mr. Morris."

"What were you 'fraid of?"

"'Kase Mis' Morris gone."

AN INCIDENT

They were riding rapidly now, and the talk was jolted out.

"Where?"

"I dun'no', suh, but I ent tech um."

"You're a damned liar."

"No, suh, I ent tech um ; I des look at um."

"I'd like to gouge your eyes out !" cried one of the men, and struck him.

"None o' that !" ordered the sheriff. "And you keep your mouth shut, Abram ; you'll have time to talk on your trial."

"Blast a trial !" growled the crowd.

"The rope's round his neck now," suggested one, "and I see good trees at every step."

"Please, suh, gentlemen," pleaded the shaking negro, "I ent done nuttin'."

"Shut your mouth !" ordered the sheriff again, "and ride faster. Day 'll soon break."

"You're 'fraid Mr. Morris 'll ketch us 'fore we reach the jail," laughed one of the guard. And the sheriff did not answer.

The eastern sky was gray when the party rode into Pineville, a small, straggling country town, and clattered through its one street to the jail. To the negro, at least, it was a welcome moment, for, with his feet tied under the horse, his hands tied behind his back, and a rope with a slip-knot round his neck, he had not found the ride a pleasant one. A misstep of his horse would surely have precipitated his hanging, and he knew well that such an accident would have given much satisfaction to his captors. So he uttered a fer-

AN INCIDENT

vent "Teng Gawd!" as he was hustled into the jail gate and heard it close behind him.

Early as it was, most of the town was up and excited. Betting had been high as to whether the sheriff would get the prisoner safe into the jail, and even the winners seemed disappointed that he had accomplished this feat, although they praised his skilful management. But the sheriff knew that if the lady's body was found, that if Mr. Morris could find any proof against the negro, that if Mr. Morris even expressed a wish that the negro should hang, the whole town would side with him instantly; and the sheriff knew, further, that in such an emergency he would be the negro's only defender, and that the jail could easily be carried by the mob.

All these thoughts had been with him during the long night, and though he himself was quite willing to hang the negro, being fully persuaded of his guilt, he was determined to do his official duty, and to save the prisoner's life until sentence was lawfully passed on him. But how? If he could quiet the town before the day brightened, he had a plan, but to accomplish this seemed wellnigh impossible.

He handcuffed the prisoner and locked him into a cell, then advised his escort to go and get food, as before the day was done—indeed, just as soon as Mr. Morris should reach the town—he would probably need them to help him defend the jail.

They nodded among themselves, and winked,

AN INCIDENT

and laughed a little, and one said, "Right good play-actin'"; and watching, the sheriff knew that he could depend on only one man, his own brother, to help him. But he sent him off along with the others, and was glad to see that the crowd of towns-people went with his guard, listening eagerly to the details of the suspected tragedy and the subsequent hunt. This was his only chance, and he went at once to the negro's cell.

"Now, Abram," he said, "if you don't want to be a dead man in an hour's time, you'd better do exactly what I tell you."

"Yes, suh, please Gawd."

"Put on this old hat," handing him one, "and pull it down over your eyes, and follow me. When we get outside, you walk along with me like any ordinary nigger going to his work; and remember, if you stir hand or foot more than to walk, you are a dead man. Come on."

There was a back way out of the jail, and to this the sheriff went. Once outside, he walked briskly, the negro keeping step with him diligently. They did not meet any one, and before very long they reached the sheriff's house, which stood on the outskirts of the town. Being a widower, he knocked peremptorily on the door, and when it was opened by his son, he marched his prisoner in without explanation.

"Shut the door, Willie," he said, "and load the Winchester."

"Please, suh—" interjected the negro.

For answer, the sheriff took a key from the

AN INCIDENT

shelf, and led him out of the back door to where, down a few steps, there was another door leading into an underground cellar.

"Now, Abram," he said, "you're to keep quiet in here till I can take you to the city jail. There is no use your trying to escape, because my two boys 'll be about here all day with their repeating rifles, and they can shoot."

"Yes, suh."

"And whoever unlocks this door and tells you to come out, you do it, and do it quick."

"Yes, suh."

Locking the door, the sheriff turned to his son. "You and Charlie must watch that door all day, Willie," he said; "but you mustn't seem to watch it; and keep your guns handy, and if that nigger tries to get away, kill him; don't hesitate. I must go back to the jail and make out like he's there. And tell Charlie to feed the horse and hitch him to the buggy, and let him stand ready in the stable, for when I'll want him I'll want him quick. Above all things, don't let anybody know that the nigger's here. But keep the cellar key in your pocket, and shoot if he tries to run. If your uncle Jim comes, do whatever he tells you, but nobody else, lessen they bring a note from me. Now remember. I'm trusting you, boy; and don't you make any mistake about killing the nigger if he tries to escape."

"All right," the boy answered, cheerfully, and the father went away. He almost ran to the jail, and, entering once more by the back door,

AN INCIDENT

found things undisturbed. Presently his brother called to him, and the gates and doors being opened, came in, bringing a waiter of hot food and coffee.

"I told Jinnie you'd not like to leave the jail," he said, "an' she fixed this up."

"Jinnie's mighty good," the sheriff answered, "and sometimes a woman's mighty handy to have about—sometimes; but I'd not leave one out in the country like Mr. Morris did; no, sir, not in these days. We could do it before the war and during the war, but not now. The old niggers were taught some decency; but these young ones! God help us, for I don't see any safety for this country 'cept Judge Lynch. And I'll tell you this is my first an' last term as sheriff. The work's too dirty."

"Buck Thomas was a boss sheriff," his brother answered; "he found the niggers all right, but the niggers never found the jail, and the niggers were 'fraid to death of him."

"Maybe Buck was right," the sheriff said, "and 'twas heap the easiest way; but here comes the town."

The two men went to the window and saw a crowd of people advancing down the road, led by Mr. Morris and his friends on horseback.

"I b'lieve you're the only man in this town that 'll stand by me, Jim," the sheriff said. "I swore in six last night, and I see 'em all in that crowd. Poor Mr. Morris! in his place I'd do just what he's doin'. Blest if yonder ain't Doty

AN INCIDENT

Buxton comin' to help me! I'll let him in; but see here, Jim, I'm going to send Doty to telegraph to the city for Judge More, and I want you to slip out the back way right now, and run to my house, and tell Willie to give you the buggy and the nigger, and you drive that nigger into the city. Of course you'll kill him if he tries to escape."

"The nigger ain't here!"

"I'm no fool, Jim. And I'll hold this jail, me and Doty, as long as possible, and you drive like hell! You see?"

"I didn't know you really *wanted* to save the nigger," his brother remonstrated; "nobody b'lieves that."

"I don't, as a nigger. But you go on now, and I'll send Doty with the telegram, and make time by talkin' to Mr. Morris. I don't think they've found anything; if they had, they'd have come a-galloping, and the devil himself couldn't have stopped 'em. Gosh, but its awful! Who knows what that nigger's done! When I look at Mr. Morris, I wish you fellers had overpowered me last night, and had fixed things."

He let his brother out at the back, then went round to the front gate, where he met the man whom he had called Doty Buxton.

"Go telegraph Judge More the facts of the case," he said, "an' ask him to come. I don't believe I'll need any men if he'll come; and besides, he and Mr. Morris are friends."

AN INCIDENT

As the man turned away, one of the horse-men rode up to the sheriff.

"We demand that negro," he said.

"I supposed that was what you'd come for, Mr. Mitchell," the sheriff answered; "but you know, sir, that as much as I'd like to oblige you, I'm bound to protect the man. He swears that he's never touched Mrs. Morris."

"Great God, sheriff! how can you mention the thing quietly? You know—"

"Yes, I know; and I know that I'll never do the dirty work of a sheriff a day after my term's up. But we haven't any proof against this nigger except that he ran away—"

"Isn't that enough when the lady can't be found, nor a trace of her?"

"I found the hatchet."

"And—!"

"It was clean, thank God!"

Mr. Mitchell jerked the reins so violently that his horse, tired as he was, reared and plunged.

"Mr. Morris declines to speak with you," he went on, when the horse had quieted down, "but he's determined that the negro shall not escape, and the whole county 'll back him."

"I know that," the sheriff answered, patiently, "and in his place I'd do the same thing; but in my place I must do my official duty. I'll not let the nigger escape, you may be sure of that, and I've telegraphed for Judge More to come out here. I've telegraphed the whole case. Surely Mr. Morris 'll trust Judge More?"

AN INCIDENT

Mitchell dragged at his mustache. "Poor Morris is nearly dead," he said.

"Of course; won't he go and eat and rest till Judge More comes? Every house in the town 'll be open to him."

"No; he'll not wait nor rest; and we're determined to hang that negro."

"It 'll be mighty hard to shed our blood—friends and neighbors," remonstrated the sheriff—"and all over a worthless nigger."

"That's your lookout," Mr. Mitchell answered. "A trial and a big funeral is glory for a negro, and the penitentiary means nothing to them but free board and clothes. I tell you, sheriff, lynching is the only thing that affects them."

"You won't wait even until I get an answer from Judge More?"

"Well, to please you, I'll ask." And Mitchell rode back to his companions.

The conference between the leaders was longer than the sheriff had hoped, and before he was again approached Doty Buxton had returned, saying that Judge More's answer would be sent to the jail just as soon as it came.

"You'll stand by me, Doty?" the sheriff asked.

"'Cause I like you, Mr. Partin," Doty answered, slowly; "not 'cause I want to save the nigger. I b'lieve in my soul he's done drowned the po' lady's body."

"All right; you go inside and be ready to chain the gate if I am run in." Then he waited for the return of the envoy.

AN INCIDENT

John Morris sat on his horse quite apart even from his own friends, and after a few words with him, Mitchell had gone to the group of horsemen about whom the townsmen were gathered. The sheriff did not know what this portended, but he waited patiently, leaning against the wall of the jail and whittling a stick. He knew quite well that all these men were friendly to him; that they understood his position perfectly, and that they expected him to pretend to do his duty to a reasonable extent, and so far their good-nature would last; but he knew equally well that in their eyes the negro had put himself beyond the pale of the law; that they were determined to hang him, and would do it at any cost; and that the only mercy which the culprit could expect from this upper class to which Mr. Morris belonged was that his death would be quick and quiet. He knew also that if they found out that he was in earnest in defending the prisoner he himself would be in danger, not only from Mr. Morris and his friends, but from the townsmen as well. Of course all this could be avoided by showing them that the jail was empty; but to do this would be at this stage to insure the fugitive's capture and death. To save the negro he must hold the jail as long as possible, and if he had to shoot, shoot into the ground. All this was quite clear to him; what was not clear was what these men would do when they found that he had saved the negro and they had stormed an empty jail.

AN INCIDENT

He was an old soldier, and had been in many battles; he had fought hardest when he knew that things were most hopeless; he had risked his life recklessly, and death had been as nothing to him when he had thought that he would die for his country. But now—now to risk his life for a negro, for a worthless creature whom he thought deserved hanging—was this his duty? Why not say, "I have sent the negro to the city"? How quickly those fierce horsemen would dash away down the road! Well, why not? He drew himself up. He was not going to turn coward at this late day. His duty lay very plain before him, and he would not flinch. And he fixed his eyes once more on the little stick he was cutting, and waited.

Presently he saw a movement in the crowd, and the thought flashed across him that they might capture him suddenly while he stood there alone and unarmed. He stepped quickly to the gate, where Doty Buxton waited, and standing in the opening, asked the crowd to stand back and to send Mr. Mitchell to tell him what the decision was. There was a moment's pause; then Mitchell rode forward.

"Mr. Morris says that Judge More cannot help matters. The negro must die, and at once. We don't want to hurt you, and we don't want to destroy public property, but we are going to have that wretch if we have to burn the jail down. Will you stop all this by delivering the prisoner to us?"

AN INCIDENT

The sheriff shook his head. "I can't do that, sir. But one thing I do ask, that you'll give me warning before you set fire to the jail."

"If that 'll make you give up, we'll set fire now."

"I didn't say it 'd make me surrender, but only that I'd like to throw a few things out—like Doty Buxton, for instance," smiling a little.

"All right ; when we stop trying to break in, we'll be making ready to smoke you out. The jail's empty but for this negro, I hear."

"Yes, the jail's empty ; but don't you think you oughter give me a little time to weigh matters?"

"Is there any chance of your surrendering?"

"To be perfectly honest," the sheriff answered, "there isn't." Then, seeing the crowd approaching, he slipped inside the heavy gate, and Doty Buxton chained it. "Now, Doty," he said, "we'll peep through these auger-holes and watch 'em ; and when you see 'em coming near, you must shoot through these lower holes. Shoot into the ground just in front of 'em. It's nasty to have the dirt jumpin' up right where you've got to walk. I know how it feels. I always wanted to hold up both feet at once. I reckon they've gone to get a log to batter down the gate. They can do it, but I'll make 'em take as long as I can. We mustn't hurt anybody, Doty, but we must protect the State property as far as we're able. Here they come ! Keep the dirt dancin', Doty. See that ? They don't like it. I told you they'd want

AN INCIDENT

to take up both feet at once. When bullets are flying round your head, you can't help yourself, but it's hard to put your feet down right where the nasty little things are peckin' about. Here they come again! Keep it up, Doty. See that? They've stopped again. They ain't real mad with me yet, the boys ain't; only Mr. Morris and his friends are mad. The boys think I'm just pretending to do my duty for the looks of it; but I ain't. Gosh! Now they've fixed it! With Mr. Morris at the front end of that log, there's no hope of scare. He'd walk over dynamite to get that nigger. Poor feller! Here they come at a run! Don't hurt anybody, Doty. Bang! Wait; I'll call a halt by knocking on the gate; it 'll gain us a little more time."

"What do you want?" came in answer to the sheriff's taps.

"I'll arrest every man of you for destroying State property," the sheriff answered.

"All right; come do it quick," was the response. "We're waitin', but we won't wait long."

"I reckon we'll have to go inside, Doty," the sheriff said; then to the attacking party, "If you'll wait till Judge More comes, I promise you the nigger 'll hang."

For answer there was another blow on the gate.

"Remember, I've warned you!" the sheriff called.

"Hush that rot!" was the answer, followed by a third blow.

AN INCIDENT

The sheriff and Doty retreated to the jail, and the attack went on. It was a two-story building of wood, but very strongly built, and unless they tried fire the sheriff hoped to keep the besiegers at bay for a little while yet. He stationed Doty at one window, and himself took position at another, each with loaded pistols, which were only to be used as before—to make “the dirt jump.”

“To tell you the truth, Doty,” the sheriff said, “if you boys had had any sense you’d have overpowered me last night, and we’d not have had all this trouble.”

“We wanted to,” Doty answered, “but you’re new at the business, an’ you talked so big we didn’t like to make you feel little.”

“Here they come!” the sheriff went on, as the stout gate swayed inward. “One more good lick an’ it’s down. That’s it. Now keep the dirt dancin’, Doty, but don’t hurt anybody.”

Mr. Morris was in the lead, and apparently did not see the “dancin’ dirt,” for he approached the jail at a run.

“It’s no use, Doty,” the sheriff said; “all we can do is to wait till they get in, for I’m not going to shoot anybody. It may be wrong to lynch, but in a case like this it’s the rightest wrong that ever was.” So the sheriff sat there thinking, while Doty watched the attack from the window.

According to his calculations of time and distance, the sheriff thought that the prisoner was now so far on his way as to be almost out of danger by pursuit, and his mind was busy with

AN INCIDENT

the other question as to what would happen when the jail was found to be empty. He had not heard from Judge More, but the answer could not have reached him after the attack began. He felt sure that the judge would come, and come by the earliest train, which was now nearly due.

"The old man 'll come if he can," he said to himself, "and he'll help me if he comes ; and I wish the train would hurry."

He felt glad when he remembered that he had given the keys of the cells to his brother, for though he would try to save further destruction of property by telling the mob that the jail was empty, he felt quite sure that they would not believe him, and in default of keys, would break open every door in the building ; which obstinacy would grant him more time in which to hope for Judge More and arbitration. That it was possible for him to slip out once the besiegers had broken in never occurred to him ; his only thought was to stay where he was until the end came, whatever that might be. They were taking longer than he had expected, and every moment was a gain.

Doty Buxton came in from the hall, where he had gone to watch operations. "The do' is givin'," he said ; "what 'll you do?"

"Nothin'," the sheriff answered, slowly.

"Won't you give 'em the keys?"

"I haven't got 'em."

"Gosh !" and Doty's eyes got big as saucers.

AN INCIDENT

Very soon the outer door was down, and the crowd came trooping in, all save John Morris, who stopped in the hallway. He seemed to be unable even to look at the sheriff, and the sheriff felt the averted face more than he would have felt a blow.

"We want the keys," Mitchell said.

The sheriff, who had risen, stood with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes, filled with sympathy, fastened on Mr. Morris, standing looking blankly down the empty hall.

"I haven't got the keys, Mr. Mitchell," he answered.

"Oh, come off!" cried one of the townsmen. "Rocky!" cried another. "Yo' granny's hat!" came from a third; while Doty Buxton said, gravely, "Give up, Partin; we've humored this duty business long enough."

"Do I understand you to say that you won't give up the keys?" Mitchell demanded, scornfully.

"No," the sheriff retorted, a little hotly, "you don't understand anything of the kind. I said that I didn't have the keys; and further," he added, after a moment's pause, "I say that this jail is empty."

There was silence for a moment, while the men looked at each other incredulously; then the jeering began again.

"There is nothing to do but to break open the cells," Morris said, sharply, but without turning his head. "We trusted the sheriff last night, and he outwitted us; we must not trust him again."

AN INCIDENT

The sheriff's eyes flashed, and the blood sprang to his face. The crowd stood eagerly silent ; but after a second the sheriff answered, quietly :

"You may say what you please to me, Mr. Morris, and I'll not resent it under these circumstances, but I'll swear the jail's empty."

For answer Morris drove an axe furiously against the nearest cell door, and the crowd followed suit. There were not many cells, and as he looked from a window the sheriff counted the doors as they fell in, and listened for the whistle of the train that he hoped would bring Judge More. The doors were going down rapidly, and as each yielded the sheriff could hear cries and demonstrations. What would they do when the last one fell?

Presently Doty Buxton, who had been making observations, came in, pale and excited. "You'd better git yo' pistols," he said, "an' I'll git mine, for they're gittin' madder an' madder every time he ain't there."

"Well," the sheriff answered, "I want you to witness that I ain't armed. My pistols are over there on the table, unloaded. Thank the good Lord!" he exclaimed, suddenly ; "there's the train, an' Judge More ! I hope he'll come right along."

"An' there goes the last do' !" said Doty, as, after a crash and a momentary silence, oaths and ejaculations filled the air. He drew near the sheriff, but the sheriff moved away.

"Stand back," he said ; "you've got little children."

AN INCIDENT

In an instant the crowd rushed in, headed by Morris, whose burning eyes seemed to be starting from his drawn white face. Like a flash Doty sprang forward and wrenched an axe from the infuriated man, crying out, "Partin ain't armed!"

For answer a blow from Morris's fist dropped the sheriff like a dead man. A sudden silence fell, and Morris, standing over his fallen foe, looked about him as if dazed. For an instant he stood so, then with a violent movement he pushed back the crowding men, and lifting the sheriff, dragged him towards the open window.

"Give him air," he ordered, "and go for the doctor, and for cold water!" He laid Partin flat and dragged open his collar. "He's not dead—see there; I struck him on the temple; under the ear would have killed him, but not this, not this! Give me that water, and plenty of it, and move back. He's not dead, no; and I didn't mean to kill him; but he has worked against me all night, and I didn't think a white man would do it."

"He's comin' round, Mr. Morris," said Doty, who knelt on the other side of the sheriff; "an' he didn't bear no malice against you—don't fret; but it's a good thing I jerked that axe outer yo' hand! See, he's ketchin' his breath; it's all right," as Partin opened his eyes slowly and looked about him.

A sound like a sigh came from the crowd; then a voice said, "Here comes Judge More."

Morris was still holding his wet handkerchief



“MORRIS, STANDING OVER HIS FALLEN FOE, LOOKED ABOUT HIM AS IF DAZED”

AN INCIDENT

on the sheriff's head when the old judge came in. "My dear boy," he said, laying his hand on John Morris's shoulder. But Morris shook his head.

"Let's talk business, Judge More," he said, "and let's get Partin into a chair, where he can rest; I've just knocked him over."

Then Morris left the room, and Mitchell with him, going to the far side of the jail-yard, where they walked up and down in silence. It was not long before Judge More and the sheriff joined them.

"The evidence was too slight for lynching," the judge said, looking straight into John Morris's eyes.

"Great God!" Morris cried, and struck his hands together.

"What more do you want?" Mitchell demanded, angrily. "His wife has disappeared, and the negro ran away."

"True, and I'll see to the case myself; but I'm glad that you did not hang the negro."

A boy came up with a telegram.

"From Jim, I reckon," the sheriff said, taking it. "No; it's for you, Mr. Morris."

It was torn open hastily; then Morris looked from one to the other with a blank, scared face, while the paper fluttered from his hold.

Mitchell caught it and read aloud slowly, as if he did not believe his eyes :

"Am safe. Will be out on the ten-o'clock train.

" 'ELEANOR.' "

AN INCIDENT

Morris stood there, shaking, and sobbing hard, dry sobs.

"It 'll kill him!" the sheriff said. "Quick, some whiskey!"

A flask was forced between the blue, trembling lips.

"Drink, old fellow;" and Mitchell put his arm about Morris's shoulders. "It's all right now, thank God!"

Morris was leaning against his friend, sobbing like a woman. The sheriff drew his coat-sleeve across his eyes, and shook his head.

"What made the nigger run away?" he said, slowly—adding, as if to himself, "God help us!"

A vehicle was borrowed, and the judge and the sheriff drove with John Morris over to the station to meet the ten-o'clock train. The sheriff and the judge remained in the little carriage, and the station agent did his best to leave the whole platform to John Morris. As the moments went by the look of anxious agony grew deeper on the face of the waiting man. The sheriff's ominous words, falling like a pall over the first flash of his happiness, had filled his mind with wordless terrors. He could scarcely breathe or move, and could not speak when his wife stepped off and put her hands in his. She looked up, and without a query, without a word of explanation, answered the anguished questioning of his eyes, whispering,

"He did not touch me."

Morris staggered a little, then drawing her

AN INCIDENT

hand through his arm, he led her to the carriage. She shrank back when she saw the judge and the sheriff on the front seat ; but Morris saying, "They must hear your story, dear," she stepped in.

"We are very thankful to see you, Mrs. Morris," the judge said, without turning his head, when the sheriff had touched up the horse and they moved away ; "and if you feel able to tell us how it all happened, it 'll save time and ease your mind. This is Mr. Partin, the sheriff."

Mrs. Morris looked at the backs of the men in front of her ; at their heads that were so studiously held in position that they could not even have glanced at each other ; then up at her husband, appealingly.

"Tell it," he said, quietly, and laid his hand on hers that were wrung together in her lap. "You sent Aggie to catch the chickens, and the dog went with her?"

"Yes," fixing her eyes on his ; "and I sent"—she stopped with a shiver, and her husband said, "Abram"—"to cut some bushes to make a broom," she went on. "I had been for a walk to the old house, and as I came back I laid my gloves and a bit of vine on the steps, intending to return at once ; but I wished to see if the boat was safe, for the water was rising so rapidly." She paused, as if to catch her breath, then, with her eyes still fixed on her husband, she went on, "I did not think that it was safe, and I untied the rope and picked up the paddle that was lying on the dam,

AN INCIDENT

intending to drag the boat farther up and tie it to a tree." She stopped again. Her husband put his arm about her.

"And then?" he said.

"And then—something, I don't know what; not a sound, but something—something made me turn, and I saw him—saw him coming—saw him stealing up behind me—with the hatchet in his hand, and a look—a look"—closing her eyes as if in horror—"such an awful, awful look! And everybody gone. Oh, John!" she gasped, and clinging to her husband, she broke into hysterical sobs, while the judge gripped his walking-stick and cleared his throat, and the sheriff swore fiercely under his breath.

"I was paralyzed," she went on, recovering herself, "and when he saw me looking he stopped. The next moment he threw the hatchet at me, and began to run towards me. The hatchet struck my foot, and the blow roused me, and I sprang into the boat. There were no trees just there, and jumping in, I pushed the boat off into the deep water. He picked up the hatchet and shook it at me, but the water was too deep for him to reach me, and he ran back along the dam and turned towards the railroad embankment. I was so terrified I could scarcely breathe; I pushed frantically in and out between the trees, farther and farther into the swamp. I was afraid that he would go round to the bridge and come down the bank to where the outlet from the swamp is and catch me there, but in a little while

AN INCIDENT

I saw where the rising water had broken the dam, and the current was rushing through and out to the river. The current caught the boat and swept it through the break. Oh, I was so glad! I am so afraid of water, but not then. I used the paddle as a rudder, and to push floating timber away. My foot was hurting me, and I looked at last and saw that it was cut."

A groan came from the judge, and the sheriff's head drooped.

"All day I drifted, and all night. I was so thirsty, and I grew so weak. At daylight this morning I found myself in a wide sheet of water, with marshes all round, and I saw a steamboat coming. I tied my handkerchief to the paddle and waved it, and they picked me up. And, John, I did not tell them anything except that the freshet had swept me away. They were kind to me, and a friendly woman bound up my foot. We got to town this morning early, and the captain lent me five dollars, John—Captain Meakin—so I telegraphed you, and took a carriage to the station and came out. Have—have you caught him? And, oh—but I am afraid—afraid!" And again she broke into hysterical sobs.

She asked no explanation. The negro's guilt was so burned in on her mind that she was sure that all knew it as well as she.

"You need have no further fears," her husband comforted. And the judge shook his head, and the sheriff swore again.

AN INCIDENT

A white-haired woman in rusty black stood talking to a negro convict. It was in a stockade prison camp in the hill country. She had been a slave-owner once, long ago, and now for her mission-work taught on Sundays in the stockade, trying to better the negroes penned there.

This was a new prisoner, and she was asking him of himself.

"How long are you in for?" she asked.

"Fuhrebber, ma'am; fuh des es long es I lib," the negro answered, looking down to where he was making marks on the ground with his toes.

"And how did you get such a dreadful sentence?"

"I ent do much, ma'm; I des scare a white lady."

A wave of revulsion swept over the teacher, and involuntarily she stepped back. The negro looked up and grinned.

"De hatchet des cut 'e foot little bit; but I trow de hatchet. I ent tech um; no, ma'm. Den atterwards 'e baby daid; den dey say I muss stay yer fuhrebber. I ent sorry, 'kase I know say I hab to wuck anywheys I is; if I stay yer, if I go 'way, I hab to wuck. En I know say if I git outer dis place Mr. Morris 'll kill me sho—des sho. So I like fuh stay yer berry well."

And the teacher went away, wondering if her work—if *any* work—would avail; and what answer the future would have for this awful problem.

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

RELIGION sat easily in Kingshaven, but was by no means neglected. The old church had been added to more than once, until at last it partially covered the grave of the first John Tremelstoun, who might have been called the founder of the town. But it could scarcely be said that religious enthusiasm had caused the building to be enlarged; it had to grow a little in order to accommodate the population, which, though it increased only naturally, yet did increase, and there being no rival house of worship in the place, the old church had to be added to.

In the thirties, however, there was a revival; it could be called nothing else, even though extremely quiet; for the people waked up spiritually, and in a way that went against all the teachings of the past, against all the training and customs, and that amounted almost to a scandal. Indeed, the extremely conservative people said, in so many words, that it "*was* scandalous to let a stranger and a Baptist turn the town topsy-turvy." Nevertheless it was done, and many who went to

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

scoff remained to pray. The meetings were held in the Sunday-school room day after day for a week, and at the end of that time Kingshaven was a new place, and a Baptist church was projected.

This awakening was epoch-making, and superseded, once for all, the war of 1812 as the thing to date from. Indeed, the war of 1812 was scarcely ever mentioned again, and the effects of the revival were not only numerous, but apparently everlasting. Among other things, the marriage of one of the youngest and loveliest of Kingshaven's daughters to a missionary was thought to be due entirely to the arousing visit of the Baptist preacher. Not that this marriage followed immediately on the stranger's visit; far from it; the young woman had scarcely finished teething when the revival took place; but in a town as conservative as Kingshaven even so ephemeral a thing as a revival remained new for a long time. So this marriage was looked on as one of the most decided results of the revival; because, unless the environment of everybody had been spiritually changed, no one could possibly have married a missionary and have gone to live in China.

When all was done and said, and the girl gone, it was found that a great fillip had been given to the cause of foreign missions, and the religious papers were read far more diligently than ever before; and when letters began to appear in their columns signed by Margaret St. Clair, the papers

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

became fashionable, and those persons who had believed in the revival and in Margaret St. Clair's marriage became more important, and assumed an "I-told-you-so" air that was to some people extremely irritating. It was thus it affected Miss Maria Cathcart, one of the aunts of the town. She remembered the days when the diocesan convention, which was the spiritual event of the year, and the races, which were the secular event of the year, were always arranged to fall together, and were most harmoniously mingled, and she had never been brought to say that it was even incongruous, much less wrong. She had disapproved entirely of the revival, and had declared that those who had announced themselves as "converted" had cast a slur on their forefathers. She, for one, required no change in her religion; those who were gone had been good people, and nobody could ever have changed *them*.

Meanwhile Miss Maria prayed very earnestly for her niece Margaret, and wrote to her regularly and lovingly; but she did not give to China; for she could not divert her charity fund from the channels in which it had always flowed, and she was not able to give more; for long division makes short provision, and if the division of the family property for generations had not in her case made short provision, it had at least made limited provision. She was not poor, for she had her comfortable house and servants, and a regular, if small, income from the family estate; she had her little carriage and her fat little horse; she

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

could not have less ; for in Kingshaven the ladies lived in almost Eastern seclusion, and never walked—except to afternoon service on Sundays, when the overfed horses and servants were supposed to need rest.

It was a pretty sight to see the whole town walking across the wide greens and down the shady streets to the old church in the middle of the church-yard, where all their dead lay under the great live-oaks and swaying moss. It was not a very tidy graveyard, but it was solemn and beautiful, and it gave one a reverential feeling. Time, and the genuine faith and love of those buried there, and of those who had buried them, transformed the place, maybe, and hallowed it. People lowered their voices when they came inside the high walls, and ceased talking altogether by the time they reached the church door ; and the young men who waited for the young women after service—for even in Kingshaven this thing was done—waited for them outside the big gates.

It was a pleasant day in May when Miss Maria ordered her little carriage, and told her maid Kizzy to put her cap into a covered basket and her knitting into her reticule, and had herself driven to see her cousin, old Mrs. George Bullen. To “spend the morning” was one of the habits of Kingshaven, and this was what Miss Maria purposed doing. She was very fond of her cousin Bullen ; and then, Miss Sophia having a large correspondence with the outside world, and Miss Phœbe being thoroughly practical and inter-

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

ested in everything, Miss Maria found a morning spent there a very pleasant thing, and always came away feeling herself fully abreast of the times.

Old Mrs. Bullen sat in her arm-chair; Miss Sophia, in her low sewing-chair, was reading aloud; and Miss Phœbe, in a higher, straighter chair, near a window, was making a cap for her mother.

"I see Cousin Maria's carriage coming across the green," she said, interrupting her sister. "She must have a letter from Margaret."

"Possibly she has heard of this Mr. Bowers who has come," Miss Sophia answered.

"I doubt that," and Miss Phœbe rose. "I'll go down and meet her." So she did, giving orders on the way for cake and wine to be brought up to Mrs. Bullen's room; then she waited in the wide shaded doorway until Miss Maria arrived. "So glad to see you, Cousin Maria," she said. "Mamma is quite well to-day."

"I have come to hear all the news," Miss Maria answered, as she slowly mounted the stairs. "Living alone as I do, one hears nothing. Ah, Polly, how well you are looking!" she went on, as she entered Mrs. Bullen's room. "Your daughters take such good care of you!"

"You are looking well yourself, Maria," Mrs. Bullen answered. "Take off your bonnet, my dear, and sit near me here out of the wind. What is the news?"

"Asking *me* for news! Indeed, I have come

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

here for that very thing. Sophia has more letters than anybody in the town, and Phœbe is such a grand manager ! Why, even at the sewing-school her negroes do better than any others. Heard from Cicely yet?"

"Yes ; she is to send Dick and the two little girls to us very soon. And what do you hear from Margaret?"

"Nothing since I was here last ; she might be dead and buried for *weeks* before *we* could hear. I never thought that I should live to see one of *my* family a missionary. You need not remonstrate, Sophia," shaking her head ; "I shall *never* approve of it—*never* !"

"Have you heard of Mr. Bowers?" Miss Sophia asked.

"Bowers?"—putting down her knitting and looking over the top of her spectacles—"who is Bowers?"

"He is staying at Eliza Tremelstoun's; he has just come over from China, and is begging through the country for money ; he is going to preach to-morrow morning. He came yesterday evening on the boat. No one expected him, and Cousin James *happened* to be on the *Bay*, and, seeing that he was a clergyman, he spoke to him. He had brought letters from Cousin Richard Denny, so Cousin James took him to his house."

"Of course if he had letters from Richard Denny he must be a person of some distinction," Mrs. Bullen said. "Richard is very careful in such matters."

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

"But a clergyman, mamma," Miss Sophia remonstrated, "would have a *right* to hospitality."

"Not without proper letters;" and Miss Maria reared her head back with much dignity. "You got that from that Baptist man, Sophia. You have never been the same since that disagreeable time when everything was upset. I have never given in to those teachings, and I *never* shall. But for that revival—and until that time I had never heard of revivals except among negroes—my niece Margaret would never have gone gallivanting off to China on any such wild-goose chase; and I don't intend to encourage *this* man, for the first thing we know we shall have another revival on our hands, and I *do not* approve of such things."

"But you will surely go to church, Maria," Mrs. Bullen said. "If it were in the week you might stay away, but to stay away on Sunday would cause a great many remarks—it would be very disagreeable."

"I am anxious to meet him," Miss Sophia put in, looking out of the window with something like longing in her eyes. "I think it must be glorious to go out and work—to spend one's life in elevating one's fellow-creatures, as Margaret is doing. I—"

"Sophia!" and Miss Maria turned on her sharply. "Don't *you*, a sensible woman, get any such nonsense into *your* head. There are plenty of ordinary people to go out and save Chinese

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

souls ; ladies and gentlemen are not meant for such work."

"There is no caste in souls, Cousin Maria," Miss Sophia answered, laughing ; "and there is no danger of my ever accomplishing anything. Even if I could leave mamma and Phœbe, I have no strength."

"The 'Lord's mercies are ever sure,'" Miss Maria said, decidedly ; "and even your delicate constitution, Sophia, is a mercy. Polly," turning to Mrs. Bullen, "you should let this make you resigned to Sophia's delicacy. Think, if she were strong, what might happen !"

"I hope I have never rebelled, Maria," Mrs. Bullen answered, "and I hope that I should not rebel even if Sophia should go away as a missionary—but I think it would kill me."

"Of *course* it would kill you," Miss Maria assented, promptly. "If I, a maiden aunt, was almost killed when Margaret went, you, a mother, would die immediately—*immediately*. But I am sorry this man has come, and he would never have *thought* of coming to Kingshaven but for that revival, and Margaret's going out as a missionary. I wish we could have been left in peace ; and perhaps the Chinese wish so, too. I am *quite* sure we should not like any one to come here and worry *us* about a new religion—I am *sure* we should not."

Miss Sophia laughed. "Cousin Maria, we have the *truth*," she said.

"That Baptist minister did not think so," Miss

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

Maria retorted. "It is twenty years ago now, but I remember it as if it had been yesterday how he roared out, 'Ye are dead in your sins!' And I got up immediately and left the room; that a person no one knew anything about should speak to me in that way was *insolent*. But the Chinese—what worse can Margaret say to the Chinese than that? Only I hope she has been too well brought up to roar as that man roared."

"That may all be so, Maria," Mrs. Bullen answered, gently, "but that revival did great good in the town. Think of three of our gayest young men being turned to the ministry—*think* of it! That was a great blessing."

"You can't be sure of that, Polly," Miss Maria returned; "even though they are now middle-aged men, you can't be sure it was a blessing until they are dead; and, blessing or not, I did not think it was dignified to be converted by a man outside of the Church."

"But you will go to church to-morrow, Cousin Maria," Miss Sophia urged. "There can be nothing against Mr. Bowers; he is a regularly ordained clergyman."

"Well, if I go to church, it will be because it is Sunday, and I always go to church on Sunday, and not because I am the least interested in this man or his mission; I have suffered enough in that way. I never was more shocked in my life than when Margaret told me what she intended to do; but in these days people do not seem to realize what is due to their birth and position."

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

"Won't you have a glass of wine, Cousin Maria," Miss Phœbe asked, "and a bit of cake?"

"Yes, my dear—thank you! And, Sophia, you may right my knitting; I always drop stitches when I am excited, and I always become excited when I speak of missionaries and revivals. There, my dear, take it."

Sunday morning saw Miss Maria in her usual place in church. But there was no humility in her bearing; rather a lofty toleration and a resigned pity—presumably for those who had departed, or who might now depart, from the ways of their forefathers. She went through the service with an air of aloofness, and did not sing the hymns; and when the tall, thin stranger, with a worn, lined face, got up to preach, she turned her head aside to look out of the window—to the graves of those who had lived and died conservatively.

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" was the text, and presently Miss Maria's eyes came in from the conservative dead and fastened themselves on a tablet to a former rector; a little later they moved on as far as the chancel railing, then gradually up the steps to the figure in the high old pulpit. Nobody saw her, for nobody's eyes seemed able to wander that day. She had brought her usual Sunday offering, which she deposited in the plate, and she spoke very little on her way from the church to the carriage, and Miss Sophia smiled to herself as she saw Miss Maria's preoccupied manner.

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

It was a very fine sermon, Miss Maria thought, as she ate her dinner—a really fine sermon ; and a preacher like that should not be wasted on Chinese—certainly not ; but of course Richard Denny would not have given him letters unless he had been a worthy person—of *course* not. She spoke to Kizzy, the girl who waited on table, and told her how thankful she should be that she was a Christian in a Christian land, and not still a poor deluded heathen, as her people were in Africa. And after dinner she went into her cool chamber and walked about with her hands behind her, thinking still of the sermon and of the blessings of Christianity. It might be very disagreeable to the Chinese to be disturbed, as she had said to Sophia Bullen the day before, but still it was good for them ; it was a necessary thing—yes, quite a necessary thing ; that man had shown it to be so. And that had been an uncommon sermon ; the more she thought of it, the more impressed she was. How blessed to be able to preach in such a way, and how blessed to hear such preaching ; how blessed she had been in all her life ; how comfortable she was, and how good God had been to her ; and how sure a Christian's hope was ! Poor heathen ! Poor Chinese ! How sorry she felt for them !

She extended her walk to the front piazza, which was on the shady side of the house. How quiet and peaceful it all was, and a nice breeze from the water ! Her lot had fallen in a fair place, and all who had gone before had lived in

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

this same delightful town, and had died in this same sure faith. Up and down she walked, with her hands clasped behind her and her face filled with peace ; then, in a quavering voice that was not at all true, she began to sing, " How firm a foundation." She sang it all through, rendering the last verse with much vigor, her voice quivering with excitement ; then she walked hastily into her room and went down on her knees. Fervently she prayed, then rose up. Alms and prayers went together—of course they did ; so, taking a key from a drawer, she opened her wardrobe, and inside of that unlocked a money-box. There was her supply in two neat piles, and she took out five dollars. Yes, she could give that much ; she would take it to Sophia Bullen at afternoon service, and ask her to put it with the fund she was collecting for foreign missions. Perhaps she had been wrong in her views of missions ; but of course the revival was another affair entirely, and she could never change her views of that. But the poor heathen ! And again she began walking up and down the piazza in the pleasant summer weather. Poor Chinese, they had a bad climate ; and Margaret had always been so good—not very sprightly, though. Perhaps she *would* help the deluded things. Poor child, she must be lonely sometimes ; but God would reward her. Yes, " His mercy was ever sure." Once more she lifted up her thin, old voice, this time beginning, " When streaming from the eastern skies." There were no passers-by to hear and

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

be amused and astonished ; and if there had been, they would have said, "Only Miss Maria." So on she sang, wiping her eyes over the last verse ; for, in spite of all her comforts and friends and relatives, she was very lonely sometimes. But she finished the hymn triumphantly—"To see Thy face and sing Thy praise," and at the last word she retired to her room and knelt down once more. This time her prayers were almost audible, and longer than before ; then the money-box was opened and another five dollars was laid aside to be sent to Miss Sophia Bullen. Of course she could give ten dollars—a small tithe from all that God had given her.

"Praise God ! praise God !" she said, aloud, and broke forth into the doxology before she reached the piazza. This time she sang quite loud and long, beginning with, "There is a fountain filled with blood." How *good* God was !—how His blessings surrounded her on every side ! And she sang another hymn. How joyful she felt ! She must pray again. She prayed aloud—for all her friends and relatives ; for all God's children—then laid ten dollars more on the pile for Miss Sophia Bullen. What better could any one do than push forward the glorious work of converting the world, of bringing all men to her state of happiness ? Think, if every one were as happy as she was this beautiful afternoon !

"Forth in Thy name, O Lord, I go"—she sang at the top of her voice, that rang through the still evening air. That was what the mission-

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

aries did; aye, all good people could do it. She was old, past sixty, but she could praise and pray and give—yes, give of her substance. Pray once more; yes, and again she went down on her knees, and afterwards laid another bill aside for missions.

“Fain would I still for Thee employ
Whate’er Thy bounteous grace has given—”

She stopped abruptly, and looked at the pile of bills—

“Good gracious!” she cried, “if I don’t stop singing and praying, I shall give *all* my money!” and she pulled the bell-rope violently; then, locking up the money-box and the enclosing drawer hastily, she stood still in the middle of the room, holding the key in her hand.

Presently her maid, Kizzy, appeared.

“Is you ring de bell, Miss ’Ria?” she asked.

“Yes, Kizzy, I rang. Here—I want you to take this key and keep it until to-morrow; never mind if I ask for it, you keep it. Now put out my bonnet and mantilla; it must be almost time for church.”

“Ki! is you gwine chu’ch, Miss ’Ria?” the negro asked, as she opened the wardrobe doors, which Miss Maria had closed a few moments before. “I been yeddy you sing summuch, I t’ink say you is hab chu’ch up yer—’e soun’ same liker ’vival.”

Miss Maria started.

“A ‘revival’!” she cried. “You are foolish,

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

Kizzy—an extremely foolish girl. A 'revival'!" She walked up and down nervously for a moment, then stopped, while the maid took off her cap and put it away and brought her bonnet. She put it on quickly, then her mantilla and gloves. Then Kizzy caught sight of the money. She looked at it a moment.

"Is you gwine leff dat money dey, Miss 'Ria?" she asked.

"No, *no*," Miss Maria answered, decidedly; "give it to me; that is to go to the heathen, Kizzy," and Miss Maria folded the bills together and slipped them into her prayer-book, that went into her silk reticule. "The poor heathen. I am going to take it to Miss Sophia to send off; it is to pay the preachers to preach to them, Kizzy."

"Yes, m'am; is dat what you been singin' 'bout, Miss 'Ria, gittin' yo' sperret up to gie dat money? Dat's de way, Miss 'Ria; singin' 'll sho git de sperret up; w'en we niggers gits to singin' en shoutin', we ent know what we do, but I ent t'ink say white people do dat."

Miss Maria hurried away, Kizzy's words ringing in her ears. A revival! What nonsense! Miss Sophia Bullen was trying on her spotted lace veil, that fell full over her face, when Miss Maria appeared.

"I stopped to give you this money, Sophia," she said, "for missions."

"Oh, cousin!" Miss Sophia cried, "*can* you give as much as this?" holding the bills a little away from her. "Is it not too much?"

MISS MARIA'S REVIVAL

"I don't know, Sophia," Miss Maria answered, almost indignantly, while a little color crept up her face ; "but I *do* know this, that I sang and prayed until I had to lock my money-box and give Kizzy the key to keep for me. It was a most ridiculous proceeding ; but that is the money, the result, and I hope it will help your cause."

Miss Sophia smiled.

"A little private revival, cousin !" she said, and kissed the old lady gently.

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

“God’s in His heaven,
All’s right with the world !”

EARLY in the sixties the town of Kingshaven was surrendered and abandoned, and, on entering, the Federal army found the place deserted save for the negroes. The people had only a few hours’ notice, for they had felt quite secure behind the one small battery of light artillery at the mouth of the river. They knew nothing whatever of the war-ships that were approaching ; but they did know that the battery was manned by the gentlemen of the town, and commanded by George Bullen, and what more could be needed ?

George Bullen had warned them, and had warned the government, that the little battery would scarcely be heard by the war-ships ; was, indeed, little more than a joke ; but the government either agreed with the ladies, or was careless whether Kingshaven fell or not. So the battery retreated, and the war-vessels only waited

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

for the tide to steam up to the town. It was during this short delay that the hegira took place, the inhabitants moving in a body, driving away in their wagons and carriages, taking with them what they could, and accompanied by many of their negroes. By night and by torch-light they marched up to the ferry, across which they were taken in flat-boats to the main-land, then, some following one road and some following another, these people, who had lived and loved and disputed, who had wept and prayed and rejoiced together for generations, bade each other farewell, and went away into a wellnigh unknown world.

Miss Maria Cathcart cast in her lot with her nephew, Charles St. Clair, as being her nearest of kin ; and her little carriage and a wagon drawn by one mule brought away for her and her servants all that they could transport. In the front of the carriage, under the feet of Jack the coachman, was a basket of silver ; on the seat beside him, a box of Miss Maria's caps, and another basket of ancestral candlesticks. Inside, piled all about Miss Maria, were her clothes and house linen, and in either hand she carried a cut-glass decanter. The wagon behind was driven by Kizzy, Miss Maria's maid, who was the wife of the coachman, and in it were Kizzy's little children and the children of other servants, and all that could be saved of household stuff. Behind came other carriages and wagons, and many negroes walking with their bundles on their backs—a patriarchal procession ; but Jack and Miss

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

Maria were in the lead, because, Mr. St. Clair having to go with his company to join the army, Jack, as the oldest and most responsible negro, had the care of the party as they journeyed to the nearest town within the Southern lines, from whence they were transported by rail to the interior.

Miss Maria and the St. Clairs took a house together, and Jack hired out the negroes and collected the wages, and took care of the place they had rented, and things were more comfortable than could have been expected.

"Indeed, we get along famously," Miss Maria asserted; "we have everything quite decent, and Jack is a very good servant—butler, coachman, overseer, and several other things rolled into one; and Kizzy is doing admirably; yes, we are surprisingly comfortable, and I am most thankful."

One day the news came of her nephew's death—killed in Virginia. It was a dreadful blow, and the results which followed were most disastrous to Miss Maria, for her nephew's widow took her many children and went to her own parents. Jack and Kizzy declared that it was "berry ha'd fuh Miss 'Ria to be leff wid nuttin' but niggers"; but Miss Maria, who had no idea of being under obligations or of being a burden, bore it very quietly.

So the niece and the children went away, the children very reluctantly and with many tears, and Miss Maria moved into two rooms on the sunniest corner of the ramshackle old house, the

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

owner agreeing to let her have them for a nominal rent, seeing that in the town houses were going begging.

The neighbors seemed to feel with old Jack and Kizzy that Miss Maria had been hardly treated, and became more friendly.

But worse times came: old Jack died. Kizzy and Miss Maria did everything possible, and also the doctor and the neighbors, but nothing could save him. After this Miss Maria began to feel the want of money. She sold the mule and wagon, and later her little horse and carriage; but she did it quite pleasantly, not alluding to her needs. She and Kizzy consulted as to ways and means, and Kizzy took in washing, and her little daughter Milly became Miss Maria's maid.

The surrender came, and with it came absolute demoralization. This was a black period—a blackness that involved the whole country—and Kizzy spent much of it leaning over the back gate abusing the refugee negroes she knew, as one after another they came to ask if she were going home.

"Goin' back home!" she repeated, scornfully. "What you got down dey to go to? Who is gwine gie you bittle en close? You foolish; you t'ink say 'kase you free dese t'ings is gwine grow on de tree. No, I ain't goin'; I gwine stay right yer wid Miss 'Ria. Enty I done promise Jack say I would stay? Enty I got house yer fuh me en my chillun; enty I got fire, en close, en bittle? No, I ain't goin'. En I ain't t'ink say you would leff missis like dis; 'fo' Gawd, I ain't t'ink it!"

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

"Sis Kizzy, I 'bleeged to go," was the usual answer ; "I cahn stay in dis po' red-clay country no longer. I des wants to smell de ma'sh one mo' time, en tas'e dem fish, en crab, en 'yster, des *one* mo' time ; en I wants to feel dat good light-wood fire 'gen. I 'clay, Sis Kizzy, I des 'bleeged to go ; but I cahn tell missis good-bye ; dat I cahn do."

And they did not, but disappeared one by one during the week, until Kizzy alone was left. She did not tell Miss Maria all at once, but when the last one was gone she opened up the subject gradually, when, one morning, she was putting Miss Maria's breakfast on the table.

"I des wish I had a good fish fuh you, Miss 'Ria," she began — Miss Maria's breakfast was bacon and hominy. "I done yeddy Mingo say turrer day dat 'e was hongry en trusty fuh dem crab en fish, en I ain't shum f'om dat day to dis, en I spec' say 'e gone home. Mingo ain't no 'count nohow, 'ceppen somebody stan' by um awl de time en meck um wuck."

Miss Maria looked up. "You think that he has really gone home?" she asked.

"Yes, missis, I spec' 'e is, 'kase I ain't shum fuh dese t'ree day."

"Perhaps they will all go, Kizzy," the old lady said, making no motion to touch her breakfast.

"I spec' so, missis," Kizzy answered, pushing the little dish of hominy nearer to her mistress ; "'kase sence Jack daid, en Mass' Cha'lie is kill, de nigger ain't feel like dey's got no mawsa ; en now

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

when people tell um dey is free, den dey awl t'ink say if dey kin git back home t'ings is gwine be des like dey is always be."

Miss Maria was silent for a moment, then the light kindled in her bright old eyes, and she drew herself up. "They are very ungrateful, Kizzy," she said, "and forget that I have cared for them all their lives, and that now they ought to care for me. I hope that *you*, Kizzy, will be better behaved, for you must remember that you have lived in the house since you were two years old—indeed, your mother died *before* you were two years old—and that for more than thirty years I have had you cared for and have provided for you. But perhaps," she went on, her voice softening—"perhaps the poor things *were* homesick—perhaps they were; I am homesick myself sometimes; and, oh, my country—my poor country!"

And Miss Maria put her handkerchief, a piece of old linen, to her eyes and wept; and Kizzy, throwing her apron over her head, knelt down by her mistress's chair and sobbed too, begging pardon all the time for crying in Miss Maria's presence. But it was not long that Miss Maria wept—the tears of old age are hard, but they are few—and presently she wiped her eyes and blew her nose, which seemed to recall Kizzy's self-control, and rising, she took the dishes of bacon and hominy off the table.

"Dis is done git cole, Miss 'Ria," she said; "dis will do fuh me en de chillun; I'll git you some hot."

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

So the old lady ate her breakfast, and when she had finished, Kizzy beat up the cushions in the chair by the fire and brought Miss Maria her books for daily reading, then went away to her washing.

After this it seemed to Miss Maria that the whole country had dissolved, and her cheerfulness wavered a little. If she could have written to any one to ask for news, or have known where her kinsmen were—whether in prison, or killed in the last battles, or gone with the despairing to Mexico—if any one had sent her a line or a word, it would have been a great help; but there was such confusion that no one seemed to know anything certainly, and she knew nothing at all. For a few days she was depressed, then she took herself in hand and gave herself a good scolding. Where was the faith of her youth? Why should it fail now, “when the bread she had cast on the water in Kizzy’s direction was returning to her in such substantial fashion”? This thought made her laugh a little, and she began to walk up and down her two bare rooms and to sing her hymns as bravely and as badly as in her old Kingshaven home; and Kizzy, hearing the quavering voice, paused over her wash-tub to wipe her eyes.

Money became more scarce, so Kizzy began to work for barter—milking for a share of milk, cooking for food, and washing for a return in wood. Meanwhile Miss Maria got one or two notes, which told of nothing but death and disaster, of privation to the extent of need, and of

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

great mortality among the uncared-for negroes. Again Kizzy came in and knelt by her mistress's chair to weep.

"We's better off wey we is, Miss 'Ria," she comforted; "en I tell dem nigger dey is foolish. Mingo is des been gone 'bout t'ree munts, en now 'e daid—po' Mingo!"

"And just think," Miss Maria said, "Mass George Bullen has just got home; he has been so ill; and Miss Phœbe has been *cooking*. Yes, Kizzy, God has been very good to us, for at least we have enough to eat and are in good health. And, Kizzy, think of your Mass Tom St. Clair ploughing in his field barefooted! Think of it—educated in Europe, and owning three plantations! Poor fellow! poor fellow! And his wife cooking and washing. Kizzy, it is *awful*!"

"Yes, missis, it's berry bad, m'am," Kizzy answered; "en we's better off right wey we is; en ef dem triflin' niggers had stay wid *we*, dey is been better off too; 'kaze who know wey dey is gone now dey is daid? Nobody kin say, 'kaze dey ain't do right in leffin' we up yer by we seff. No, dat ain't been right, en I tell 'em so 'fo' dey gone; en Gawd ain't want 'em ef dey ain't do right—no, m'am, 'e ain't. Please Gawd, somebody will come en git we bime-by—please Gawd."

So Miss Maria and Kizzy set themselves to wait patiently for this "bime-by"; but again for several days Miss Maria could not sing.

Cold weather came. Cracks were everywhere

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

in the old house, and curtains and carpets nowhere. The big chimneys took a vast quantity of wood even to heat them so that they would draw, and Kizzy was dismayed. At length she and Miss Maria came to the conclusion that all the furniture had better be moved into the warmest room; then, by having a fire always, Miss Maria might keep comfortable.

"If you ketch a cole, missis, it 'll be berry bad, m'am," Kizzy agreed; "en now ebbrybody is so po' dat nobody ain't gwine t'ink nuttin' 'bout yo' baid bein' in de pahlor."

It was dreadful to live in one room, Miss Maria thought; but how much better than Tom St. Clair ploughing barefooted! And when the move was made she declared that the parlor looked much nicer for having everything in it, and it was much more sociable to have things closer to her—even poor sticks of furniture.

But Kizzy found less and less work, and she did not know what to do unless she hired out by the month. A place was offered to her by a new family who had just come to town—a clergyman and his wife. Kizzy had been scouring for them, and from her present stand-point they seemed to her to be very rich. They offered her good wages if she would come and do all the work, and she might spend the nights at her own home. She had a week in which to decide; but how could she do it—how could she leave Miss Maria and her own little children all day? She could take the youngest with her, but that would leave

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

two besides Milly at home, and how would they keep warm?

The day before Kizzy's answer was due was cold, and Kizzy had no work at all. She thought a long time while she mended various articles, sitting on the floor by the fire in Miss Maria's room. At last she said:

"Is you glad fuh simme settin' yer en sewin', missis?"

"Yes," Miss Maria answered, looking up from her book; "it seems quite proper, Kizzy; but how is it you are not working to-day?"

Kizzy waited a moment, then said, slowly, "I 'ain't got no wuck, Miss 'Ria, en I cahn git none."

"No work!" Miss Maria repeated; then, after a pause, she sat up straighter in her chair and looked down on Kizzy. "Why, girl," she said, "what does this mean?"

"Miss 'Ria—I 'clay, Miss 'Ria, dat is de trute," Kizzy asserted, so mournfully that she showed all the whites of her eyes. "De trute is de light, Miss 'Ria, en dat is de trute; I try en I try, en I cahn fine nuttin' to do; no, m'am, 'ceppen—" But here Kizzy broke down, and threw her apron over her head, crying.

"Well," Miss Maria said, "excepting where?"

"Scuge me, missis; I know 'tain't no manners to cry, but I cahn he'p it, Miss 'Ria."

"Of course I'll excuse you," Miss Maria answered, rather sternly, for she did not know what to expect; "but what does it all mean?"

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

Kizzy wiped her eyes: Miss Maria's sternness quieted her.

"I mean, Miss 'Ria, dat I kin git wuck, but I hafter go 'way from home to do it, m'am. I kin come yer to sleep at night, but I muss go by daylight in de mawnin', en come home after da'k—yes, m'am."

"Well?" said Miss Maria.

"Well, m'am, dey won't be nobody yer but Milly, Miss 'Ria, en de two nex' chilluns—I'll teck de younges' one wid me."

"Well?" Miss Maria said again.

"En who's gwine teck care o' you, Miss 'Ria, en git yo' dinner hot, m'am?"

"Milly," Miss Maria answered.

"En who's gwine teck care o' de chillun, m'am?"

"Milly."

"En how is dey gwine keep wa'm?"

Kizzy's voice was low, and her eyes were fixed on her mistress's face like the eyes of a dumb creature, and Miss Maria looked at Kizzy. This was the critical point. To have a fire out in Kizzy's room for these two children would be dangerous as well as expensive; to send them to the house of another negro would be expensive also, and not altogether safe; yet to expect that they should sit on the floor in Miss Maria's room was to Kizzy far more presumptuous than to expect that they should sit on the floor of heaven. A dozen little negroes might come into her mistress's room to be taught if Miss Maria pleased,

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

or to serve Miss Maria, but for her to *ask* Miss Maria to let her children stay there all day while she was gone seemed to her to be preposterous—to be reversing things and asking Miss Maria to serve her! It had somewhat this look to Miss Maria too for a moment, then she saw an escape from the dilemma. In Kingshaven she had taught all the little negroes who lived in her yard, every day, hymns and such things; so to teach these children would be only to keep up old customs. It might entertain her, would surely do them good, and at the same time save appearances and embarrassment both for her and for Kizzy. Still looking in Kizzy's eyes, she said:

“They may stay in here, Kizzy, and I will teach them; Milly shall give them their dinner in the kitchen. It can be easily managed, I think.”

And so it was. Kizzy cooked food for the day, and left that for the children in the kitchen, and that for Miss Maria in the cupboard; and the children, spotlessly clean, waited in the back room until Miss Maria had dressed and breakfasted; then Milly, with stern disciplinary whispers, brought them into Miss Maria's room, and put them into a warm corner, from which coigne of vantage they, sitting cross-legged like little black idols, stared at their mistress, who was a part of their faith; or, with eyes that turned so far round in their sockets as to seem all white, they watched Milly as she pattered about putting things to rights. And Milly developed so won-

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

derfully under their admiring gaze, and skipped about so nimbly and assuredly on her batter-cake feet and slim little legs, that Miss Maria, looking at her over the top of her spectacles, told her she would equal her mother some day. Whereupon Milly fizzed into mirth, like a siphon of Vichy, and the little black idols in the corner rolled their eyes from Milly round again to their mistress, and fastened them there.

The weather grew colder; the big chimney in Miss Maria's room "eat wood," and Kizzy's wages made very scant provision. One thing after another Miss Maria said that she could do without. Butter was not at all necessary, nor coffee, nor sugar; milk was quite enough for her to drink. Then lights were not necessary; Miss Maria could do her reading in the day, so that for the evening the firelight would do. Fuel, too, must not be burned with any view to a special blaze for the sake of light. Sitting alone in the dusk seemed to double the desolation, and putting on two shawls and her rubbers for warmth seemed to deepen the poverty; but it could not be helped; and every evening, as Kizzy came in to make Miss Maria comfortable for the night, to bank up the precious fire and to take the children away, she seemed to bring a little freshness in, a little cheer; and as she rubbed her mistress—in an old-fashioned way, it is true, but soothingly—Miss Maria would say:

"We are one day nearer to going home, Kizzy; for somebody will surely come to fetch us."

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

"Yes, missis," Kizzy would answer, "somebody will come en git we bime-by."

Then with a sigh and a smile Miss Maria would go to sleep as quietly as a child, and Kizzy would steal away.

One day, in going his rounds, the new clergyman heard of Miss Maria—of her age, her loneliness, her poverty, and her cheerfulness. It made a moving story, and impressed the good man; but in the faithful, humble servant "Kizzy" he did not for one moment recognize his wife's dignified treasure, who had introduced herself as Mrs. Kezia Adams. He was full of the story, and at supper he retailed it to his wife, who was also deeply moved. They did not observe that Kizzy left the room hastily, nor that they had to ring twice before she returned, nor that when she did come her eyes were flashing, and her head was held unusually high. Indeed, they were so busy planning relief for Miss Maria that they did not observe Kizzy at all; but very little escaped Kizzy of the plans they made to send the stores they would buy to Miss Maria before they called, so that she would not trace the gift to them. The things should be sent in the morning, and they would call in the evening.

"Think of her having so little wood, and no lights at all, not even one candle!" Mrs. Jarvis said. "How pitiful to sit alone in the dark! I wonder if she would use a stove; but these Southern people are so devoted to their open

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

fireplaces that I doubt if she would ; yet these big chimneys are dreadfully wasteful."

Mr. Jarvis shook his head. "To send a stove," he said, "would be to tell her who sent the things, and she might not accept them. Feeling runs high, you know ; I meet it at every turn—poor people !"

Kizzy almost dropped a dish at this juncture. *Her white people poor !* No deeper insult could be offered to ex-slaves than the suggestion that their former owners had not been born in the purple and with the wealth of Croesus, and Mr. Jarvis unwittingly had offered this insult. Kizzy was in a fury.

That night she took an armful of wood. "If he t'inks I is po' buckra nigger," she muttered, vindictively, "I'll do like po' buckra nigger ; en if he is so rich, Gawd knows *I* ain't gwine let *my* missis look po' 'fo' *him*—not *me*. Any nigger 'll hab better manners en *dat*." But Kizzy kept the secret of the coming stores to herself, for she had caught the idea that Miss Maria might refuse them.

The next morning there was the most marked change in Miss Maria's room ; there were extra touches everywhere, a much larger fire than usual, and the two little black idols had disappeared. Gone to help their mother, Milly said.

Just as Miss Maria finished her reading, the front door was heard to open and steps sounded in the hall. Miss Maria waited, thinking some friend had come in ; then hearing the door close

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

again, she sent Milly to investigate ; then following herself, found a large basket and an uncovered box filled with all sorts of bags and bundles, addressed to Miss Maria Cathcart.

Miss Maria and Milly stared ; then Miss Maria said :

“It is a present. How kind !” Her face lighted up like a child’s. “You can’t move the basket or the box, Milly,” she went on, “but you can bring in the packages.” And forthwith Milly began work ; and sometimes running and sometimes staggering, and at all times puffing with excitement and delight, she transported bundle after bundle to the table in the back room, Miss Maria walking back and forth with her, touching and pinching each thing to guess what it might be.

“A very handsome present indeed,” Miss Maria said, when everything was at last on the table—“a *very* handsome present. Crackers ; very good. Here, Milly. Coffee—butter—grits—rice—ginger-snaps. Here, Milly. Tea—flour—candles—pickles—nuts. Here, Milly. Sugar—lump-sugar. Here, Milly. Cheese. Here, Milly. Bacon—lard—raisins. Here, Milly.” By this time Milly was holding her apron. “And wine,” Miss Maria finished. “A very handsome present. I shall put some in the decanters at once. Two bottles of wine. Suppose I had not saved the decanters ! A glass of wine and a cracker will be very comfortable at twelve o’clock—*very* comfortable indeed ; quite like old times. Get the scissors, Milly.”

So the cork was poked out of one bottle, and

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

the contents divided between the two decanters, which had stood on the high mantel-piece for safety. Miss Maria placed them on the table, with a plate of raisins, a plate of nuts, a plate of crackers, and a plate of ginger-snaps, and her only wine-glasses, three in number and three in shape; then she stood off and surveyed it; and Milly, standing on one foot in her excitement, surveyed it too, and smiled an ear-to-ear smile.

"Very comfortable," Miss Maria repeated, nodding her head at the table. "Put on more wood, Milly."

"Missis!" Milly cried, returning with a log in her arms, "dey is a big new pile o' wood in de back ya'd—yes, m'am."

Miss Maria stepped briskly to the window. There it was, a *very* large pile—the biggest pile she had seen since leaving home. The old lady's face beamed as she folded her hands together.

"God is good," she said, softly, "*very* good. Now Kizzy can return to her proper duties. Yes, with all that has been provided, we can live decently once more. Praise the Lord!" She felt like sending Milly off immediately to call her mother home, but her eyes falling on the boxes of candles, she thought of something she wished to do at once. The candles must be put into the candlesticks—for what else had she saved them? So from the mantel-piece and the closet all the candlesticks were taken; and Milly, seated on the floor, rubbed them with a woollen rag, munching the while from her store of confections piled

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

away in the corner ; and Miss Maria, hunting up a piece of white paper from around one of the packages, cut little frills with which to make the candles stand firm in the sticks.

It was a very busy day indeed, Miss Maria scarcely wishing to stop for dinner ; but by the afternoon the candles were all put into the sticks, with the jaunty little frills about the base of each, and were arranged—and every few moments rearranged—about the room.

The big branches were on the table, where the wine and other refreshments still stood ; the smaller branches were on the mantel-piece, flanked by two straight candlesticks ; the others were put about in various places, for Miss Maria had decided that she would have a plenty of light. The candles had been sent to give her light and comfort and pleasure, and as soon as it was dark she would gain all this by lighting them. Things had been very bad, but they had taken a turn for the better, and she was weary of darkness and loneliness. In the back room she had stuck the candles into bottles, and Milly had made a fire in there too, so that her mistress could go in and out without fear of taking cold. Miss Maria felt as if she had been keeping house once more ; and all being arranged to her satisfaction, she waited anxiously for the evening and the illumination. By five o'clock she and Milly were in a glow of light. Fine fires were blazing on both hearths, and Miss Maria was walking up and down singing, when a knock came at the outer door. Not a

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

remarkably loud knock, but one that made Milly spring to her feet and Miss Maria stop in her walk. The neighbors usually came to the inner door, and this knock, being on the outer door, was a stranger's, and being loud, was a man's.

"Put another log on the fire, Milly," Miss Maria said, as she stepped over to the glass to see if her cap and kerchief were straight. "It must be the new clergyman. And sweep up the hearth, quickly, before you go to the door." Then Miss Maria took from a box filled with dead rose-leaves one of the squares of old linen which she had hemmed for pocket-handkerchiefs, and holding it by the middle, resumed her seat, while Milly put away in the corner the bunch of feathers that served as a hearth-broom.

To Milly and to Miss Maria the room looked very fine and cheerful, while to the strangers entering it seemed inexpressibly incongruous and pathetic.

Miss Maria rose and stepped forward to meet them, bowing graciously, and extending her delicate hand as they introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis. There was wonder in their eyes, and putting it down to the brightness of her apartment, Miss Maria was pleased that they should be surprised.

"It has been such a cloudy day," she said, cheerfully, when they were seated, "that I lighted the candles early, and lighted them all. I enjoy light and warmth, and am so thankful to have it; of late it has not been plentiful"—and she smiled

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

a little to herself at the mild way in which she had stated her case.

"It looks very cheerful indeed," Mr. Jarvis answered, slowly, while Mrs. Jarvis, suffering "pain and grief" for the wild waste she saw, looked on the solidity of the candlesticks and not on the candles, and on the sparkle of the old decanters rather than on the wine.

"A kind friend has sent me quite a batch of nice things," Miss Maria went on. "Won't you try a glass of wine and a cake?" She rose and filled the glasses; but Mrs. Jarvis declining, the ceremony was between Mr. Jarvis and herself.

"Your very good health, sir," she said, with a bow.

"Your very good health, madam," Mr. Jarvis returned, and felt as if he had suddenly reverted into his own grandfather.

"Things have been very bad for everybody," Miss Maria continued, as she sipped her wine; "but I knew that they would get better, and they have. I have always been of a very hopeful and cheerful disposition. I had begun to think too much so"—nodding gayly—"and that I was being chastened for it; but now you see how little good the chastening has done"—making a gesture that took in all the flaring candles—"for at the first opportunity I have an illumination, and change my mind."

After this the conversation ran on smoothly, but chiefly between Mr. Jarvis and his hostess; and to Milly, standing at attention between the

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

strangers and her prog in the corner, Miss Maria seemed a new being—so quick and ready of speech, laughing so gayly, and gesticulating so vivaciously, but with no mention whatever of woes or wants, save as they were the woes and wants of the country.

And Mrs. Jarvis felt defrauded. As they closed the gate she said, "Those candles should have lasted her all winter."

And her husband answered, "I feel like spending my whole salary on candles."

Kizzy was enchanted, especially at the illogical command to come home. Her eyes and teeth reflected all the lights; she looked over the stores, felt the height and length of the wood-pile, deposited the three little black idols in safety, then ran back to Mrs. Jarvis.

"I cahn come yer no mo'," she said, breathlessly, to that astounded lady; "I got to stay home. Miss 'Ria Cat'cart, wey you sen' de t'ings, is my missis."

"Is she sick?"

"No, ma'am; but we hab plenty now, en I cahn stay yer no mo'."

"Miss Cathcart ought not to take you."

"Ki! I b'longs to um."

"But you said you'd stay—"

"I say dat when we 'ain't hab nuttin'."

"You *promised*."

"'Kaze we 'ain't hab nuttin'."

"You *must* keep a promise."

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

"Who gwine meck me? Nigger do what 'e wants to do, en what 'e meck to do. Who gwine meck me?"

"I won't pay you."

"You 'bleeged to pay me fuh what I done do, 'kaze it is done do."

"Not if you go without warning."

"I muss go."

"Why?"

"'Kaze I wants to, en 'kaze my missis wants me, en I tired. If you doan pay me, well—you doan pay me; I cahn he'p dat; but I gwine. I'll sen' somebody fuh cook you breakfuss."

All the way home Kizzy chuckled.

"Dey call me po' buckra nigger; I'll do like po' buckra nigger!" and she clapped her hands and laughed aloud as she ran through the darkness, and remembered the stores only as a further revenge on Mrs. Jarvis for the imagined insult.

Of course Mrs. Jarvis sent Kizzy's money, but she prophesied dire want for Miss Maria and her *ménage*; poetical justice must take account of such childish improvidence.

But no harm came to Miss Maria; Mrs. Jarvis herself would not have permitted it; still, it did not even threaten, for before the stores were exhausted, Mr. George Bullen came to bring Miss Maria and her retinue home to her own people.

So the remaining supplies were given away with much generosity, and, to Kizzy's proud de-

FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS

light, she was sent with a pair of the silver candlesticks as a parting present to Mrs. Jarvis. For, as Miss Maria said to a neighbor, she had not been able to pay anything towards Mr. Jarvis's salary, which had mortified her very much.

AN EX-BRIGADIER

AN EX-BRIGADIER

"KNOW General Stamper?" and the speaker looked at me with an expression of wonder in his eyes that amused me ; then he smiled. "Know General Stamper—'old General Billy' ? Of co'se I do. Where were you raised ?"

"Not in Alabama," I answered.

"I thought as much," came with a ring of pity in the voice. "There's nobody in *this* State has to ask who is General Stamper."

We were standing outside the door of the only thing in Booker City that could be called a building—Booker City, that might have been described as a "wide place in the road."

Over the door of this building was the sign, "*G. W. S. Booker, General Merchant*"; a little lower down came a smaller sign, "Post-office." On either side the shop, and out behind it, stretched the unbroken pine-barren ; in front the trees had been cut away, and the wheel tracks between the ragged stumps showed dimly the street of the future. Beyond the stumps came a ditch that cut through the sandy soil and deep into the red

AN EX-BRIGADIER

clay ; across this ditch two old " cross-ties " made a bridge to the railway.

Across the railway there was a blacksmith's shed, and one or two shanties where some bloodless-looking people, with straight, clay-colored hair and vacant eyes, made shift to live. And this was Booker City.

The train had left me there ten minutes before this true story opens ; my valise stood just inside the door of the shop ; my overcoat was buttoned against the chill February wind. I had come straight through from New York, sent out by a great railway syndicate as a sort of private detective to look into the merits of Booker City. By profession I am a civil engineer.

" We send you because you are a Southern man," my chief had said, " and will therefore understand the people and win their confidence. I want you to go down to this ' Booker City,' and see this ' General William Stamper.' Look the whole thing up incog ; be anything you like, and draw for anything you may want. Here is a map of the city."

So I packed my valise and started for Booker City. Arriving, I asked the only man I saw as to General Stamper, with the results given above.

" Where does General Stamper live ?" I went on.

" 'Cross the railroad 'bout a mile. He owns moster this county ; I own some, though. I own this store and down the railroad 'bout a mile ; but our fam'lies were always friends, and

AN EX-BRIGADIER

me and General Stamper persuaded the railroad to have a station here. I've got Stamper in my name." This last was said proudly.

"And you got the station in order to make your land more valuable, I suppose?" in a mild tone.

My companion turned on me slowly.

"Not exactly," he answered; "for it couldn't be made much more valuable. We've got coal and iron right back here in the hills, and a big syndicate behind us; we'll have five thousand people here by next month."

"Roosting on stumps," I asked, "and feeding on pine knots?"

"Maybe, and maybe not," he answered, quietly; "and maybe by that time you'll have money enough to come back and see."

"If not, will you have money enough to lend me a dollar or two?"

"I'll have it, you bet; but whether I'll lend it to *you* or not, that's another question; and yonder comes General Billy."

I looked in the direction indicated, and coming through the pines I saw a muddy old buggy, very much bent down on one side, and drawn by a gray mule; of course the harness was helped out with pieces of rope, and the slim, rascally looking negro boy who drove was ragged; so natural were these things to that kind of vehicle that I scarcely observed them; but the man pointed out as "General Billy" caught my attention instantly and firmly. When the buggy

AN EX-BRIGADIER

stopped I saw that his left arm and right leg were missing, but, in spite of that, he leaped out quite nimbly. He was a large, ruddy man, dressed in a baggy suit of gray jeans, with a soft black hat drawn well down on his head, and from under it some fine gray hair curled over his coat collar. His eyes were bright and deep set, and twinkled as merrily as if a third of him were not in the grave. He swung himself along with great agility, and had a cheery voice.

"And how is the father of my country to-day?" he cried, as he hopped into the shop. Then, balancing himself skilfully, he hit my friend Booker a pretty solid blow with his crutch. "George Washington Stamper Booker! By gad, man! if your name had done its duty it would have destroyed you long ago; every day I am expecting to hear that it has struck in and killed you. And your name?"—leaning on his crutches and eying me keenly. "You look very familiar somehow."

"Willoughby is my name," I answered.

"Willoughby? The devil! Kemper Willoughby?"

"John Kemper Willoughby," I amended, in some surprise.

"Oh, blast the John! Here, shake!" extending his one hand, that seemed to me to be marvellously small. "What kin are you to old Kemper Willoughby of Chilhowie?"

"Grandson."

AN EX-BRIGADIER

"Bless my eyes, my *dear* boy!" and he wrung my hand painfully almost. "I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for this meeting; no, sir, not five thousand; no, not Booker City itself," throwing back his head with a ringing laugh.

It was a sweet laugh, and his voice had a tone in it that made me think of my father; his face was clean-shaven, too, like my father's, and his mouth and teeth and laugh reminded me of Joseph Jefferson.

"There was something in the cut of you," he went on, "and in the setting of your eyes, that took me back to some fig-trees in your grandfather's back yard. You looked as your father Kemper used to look when we were stealing figs—it was not really stealing, you know; only Mrs. Willoughby was saving the figs for something. God knows what women save things for, but they are always doing it. But you looked just like him—surprised and amused, and a little disgusted with yourself. All the Willoughbys look alike—all cut out of the same piece of cloth. See here, General Washington Booker, look alive, and hand out the mail. I want to take the boy home," rattling on without drawing a breath. "Fifty years ago we were in those fig-trees. And your father?"

"I am the only one of the name left," I answered, briefly.

"Good heavens!"—taking up the one letter that Booker laid on the counter—"only one, and there used to be such lots of them—Willoughbys

AN EX-BRIGADIER

world without end; only one left—only one!" and, leaning on his crutch, he looked at me sadly. "The war, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes."

"And at the last we went under, all for nothing; and now we must be patient, and say we were wrong, or, at the least, unwise, and forget those who lie under the sod! Never! And, by gad, sir, I'll make something out of them—something! Forget, sir? No, sir. There's too much of me under the sod—me, myself. I'll not forget. But come, my boy, we'll have some supper and a talk, and maybe some 'condensed corn,' ha! ha!—'will you have sugar in yourn?'—and I'll tell you about those figs your dear grandmother did not save. Ah, we had ladies and gentlemen in those days—ladies from afar. I have a little girl at home, God bless her! She keeps house for me. Come on; where are your traps? Here, look alive, you young imp!"—to the negro. "Get out, sir, and put this gentleman's bag in, and you hang on behind; and don't you dare to drop off, or to get hurt. Get in, my boy"—to me. Then, calling back: "Don't answer any telegrams without consulting me, Booker; not about your own land even. Do you hear?"

"All right, General."

"Now we are off," as with wonderful ease he got into the buggy. "You can drive, of course, and will not be afraid of a runaway," laughing. "Booker City has not made my fortune yet, so I drive a mule; but just wait a little bit—just

AN EX-BRIGADIER

wait. I will sell every stump and tree before long, and come out on top. Have you anything to invest?"

"No," I answered, leaning forward to thrash the old mule, and for the first time realizing my position—almost a spy! Well, I need not be; but how to get out of it? Write that I preferred not to report? That would kill Booker City as dead as Hector. Write what had come to me from the general's talk? Die the thought and the thinker! Besides, *what* had come to my knowledge? Nothing really; but one thing was certain—I *could not* be his guest, and at the same time hold my present position. I thrashed the mule again, but a wave of the ears was the only answer; then the general turned to the back of the buggy.

"Get down, there, you miserable rascal!" he cried. "How dare you ride at ease, and let a gentleman exhaust himself on this beast! Get down, sir; yes, and be in a hurry." The riding at ease meant that Jupiter was hanging on to the back of the seat with his hands, while his feet were clinging to the springs of the vehicle.

He dropped off now as nimbly as a monkey, and picking up a stick as he ran, came abreast of the jogging mule very easily.

"Hi! hi! Git up, you w'ite debbil; git up!" he cried, prodding the mule as he ran. "Hi! hi! I'll make you know; I'll make you go; I'll poke you troo an' troo—hi! hi!"

"That's you, Jupiter," cried the general, "poke

AN EX-BRIGADIER

him lively! You'll be President of these United States yet—ha! ha! Get up now, quick, you lazy dog," as, with a grin that seemed to meet at the back of his head, Jupiter made a dash at the buggy, and swung himself into place once more. It was a wild race we were having then. The mule was cantering, with his ears backed, and his tail going round and round like a windmill.

"Negroes and mules were made for each other," the general said, as he pulled his hat on more firmly. "They understand each other in a way that can be explained only by affinity; and to see a negro on a mule is like hearing a mocking-bird sing on a moonlight night in summer—the 'eternal fitness' is satisfied."

While he talked we had come at a rattling pace through the pine woods, and now were moving more slowly along a red clay road, that, fringed with blackberry briars, ran narrow and deep between rail fences. Presently we began a long ascent, still between rail fences, and the mule settled down into a walk once more.

"We are nearing home now," the general went on, "and soon we'll see the ancestral roof-tree, which will be turned into a foundry shortly, I hope. I used to have some sentiment, sir, but poverty unscrews the spinal column of sentiment. I'll be hanged if I can stand living from hand to mouth here, where once I lived on the fat of the land. No, sir. I'll sell every stick of timber, and every foot of land, and throw in the malaria for nothing. I've starved long enough on 'befo'-

AN EX-BRIGADIER

de-wah ' memories. I'm sick of it, and it is not wholesome. I want to take my child away from this African atmosphere. Her blood and breeding will show anywhere, sir ; and with a few shekels to put a halo around her head, why, she can do and be what she likes—God bless her ! And I'll make those shekels ; I have a few already. But just after the war, I'll give you my word, sir, I was an absolute beggar. I borrowed money, and went to Mexico — well, that is a story."

We had reached the brow of the hill by this, and half-way down the other side I saw an oasis in the red fields and a glimpse of a white house. A square white house it proved to be, with deep piazzas, and a long wing running back, and an old garden in front, with cedar-trees and flags, and woodbine on trellises ; there were some oak-trees and locust-trees, all bare of leaves ; and the fence and gate were on their last legs. I had seen innumerable places like it in the inland South, felt familiar with the gullied gravel-walk and the "corn-shucks" door-mat, even with the red clay footmarks that extended into the hall, and felt that I knew quite well the slim, fair-haired girl who greeted us with "How are you, Pappy darling ?" Then she stopped, looking at me frankly from a pair of handsome brown eyes.

"A friend of my youth, Agnes, my dear ; a Willoughby of Chilhowie, where my happiest holidays were spent. Kemper Willoughby, his father, was my boyhood friend, and this after-

AN EX-BRIGADIER

noon I found him stranded in Booker City. I knew him by his eyes—good eyes. Shake hands; both hands, if you like. If he is true to his blood, you'll never find an honester gentleman."

So we shook hands, smiling the while, and I was glad of my blood when I looked in her eyes, and hated, without reason, my good chief in far-away New York.

A Willoughby of Chilhowie—poor old Chilhowie, lost in the war, and now great phosphate-works. The old name had a goodly sound to it, and the brown eyes took a reverent expression almost. Evidently she had heard stories of the old place and people. The rooms were carpetless—desolate expanses rather—but the fires were grand, and the few homely chairs were most comfortable. After a while we had a good country supper, then Agnes brought some tumblers and sugar, and Jupiter appeared with a kettle, that soon was singing on the fire, and the general hopped over to a cupboard in the wall and brought out a black bottle. My case was full of cigars, but the general preferred his pipe.

"I got that pipe in Mexico," he said—"a long story."

"A disgraceful story, Pappy," his daughter added, bringing her work-basket from a far table—"a story that will shock Mr. Willoughby." She was seated now, with the fire-light playing on her delicate features and fair hair, and as her little hands filled the battered old pipe, she looked up lovingly at the old man. "You must give Mr.

AN EX-BRIGADIER

Willoughby your pedigree before you tell that story."

"Oh, confound the pedigree! Willoughby *is* a gentleman, therefore he knows one under any disguise. Will you 'have sugar in yourn,' my dear boy, and the story of the pipe, or rather of the time when I got the pipe? It is the joy of my life—that time; it was life! And that old pipe was the beginning of the first comfort I had after the war. I had fought for four years in the cavalry, part of the time with Forrest. We were not what you would call a godly set, Agnes; but good fellows, who would die, or worse, would come near to lying, for a friend—brave fellows: God bless every man of them! We were a reckless set, and death meant nothing to us; but we lived, ye gods! Life since has seemed a faded rag. Well, I lost my leg first. I had a hand-to-hand scuffle for it, and I will not say how many I sent to their long homes—it hurts Agnes—but—well, my leg went; and not a year after, my arm. I killed the rascal who shot me in the arm. Then came the surrender"—his voice losing its cheery ring—"and I was fit to murder right and left. I could not stand it, or I thought I could not, and trundled off to Mexico. Beautiful country, my dear fellow, lovely, but the lowest down nation on the face of the earth to call themselves Christians, not morals enough in the whole nation to satisfy one respectable old-time darky. I could not stand it, and determined to come home, no matter what was the state of the country. But

AN EX-BRIGADIER

how to get here. I had the whole kingdom of Texas to cross, and no money and no railways, and only half rations in the way of legs. I worked my way to the Rio Grande on a broken-down old mustang. About ten miles from the river I came to a Mexican jacal, and hesitated about going in, they are such treacherous villains. But I was hungry, and pausing outside the door I heard a groan. Somebody in distress, I thought, and, cocking my pistol, I pushed my way in. An Englishman lay there ; he had passed me two days before, travelling across country with a party of Mexicans, but I had caught him up again, and at the last gasp. The place was empty, save for him, and a pot of tomalis steaming near the fire. I looked at the Englishman first, but he was dead. I had heard his last groan probably, and his murderers had been run off by my approach. His pockets were rifled of everything save this pipe—a good pipe in its day ; meer-schaum, you see, and had a fancy stem ; but I prefer a joint or two of cane. I was glad of the tomalis ; but I did not think it safe to linger, as I did not know the number of the Mexicans. My clothes and shoe were too ragged, however, to leave a dead man as well clothed as that Englishman was, so I helped myself to a part of his wardrobe. I had not been so well dressed in years, and I laughed a little at myself. ‘You look as nice as a preacher,’ I said. Then folding up my old clothes, I left them near the dead man, and taking some extra tomalis, I left the house.

AN EX-BRIGADIER

‘As nice as a preacher,’ the words came to me again : it had been a phrase in the army when a fellow was specially well dressed. ‘As nice as a preacher?’ Why not? Who had a better time than preachers? Why not be a preacher? I could not help chuckling a little at the thought. Why not be a preacher for the time? And visions of fried chicken and hot biscuit came over my mind, and fiery steeds furnished by adoring flocks—why not? I laughed out loud as I jogged on in the darkness. A preacher? What kind? What kind? Out on the border that did not matter. As far as my experience in that country went, all one had to do was to swear one had had a call; then preach and eat. That was more than twenty years ago, you see. So I did not come to any decision, but left it all to chance.

“I was so much entertained by my thoughts that I was surprised when I found myself at the river. It was day-dawn, and, as luck would have it, I found some Mexicans with a boat just where I reached the bank. I seemed to strike terror into most of the party, and I shrewdly suspected that it was the Englishman’s clothes that did it ; most probably they had been among his murderers. Some ran away, but two remained, and agreed to put me across. Of course they thought I had money, but I kept my pistol lined on them, and when we reached the other bank, my pay was to jump ashore, and tell them in their own language that I was to meet a party of Americans

AN EX-BRIGADIER

there, and that they had better skip with my blessing and the old mustang. They did.

"I shall never forget my first day as a preacher. I thought of the character so much that at last I began to imagine myself one. I arranged sermons with the utmost facility, and all that I had ever learned of catechism and hymns and prayers came back to me. The day passed swiftly enough, although hopping along on crutches was such weary work that I began to think longingly of even my old mustang.

"About sundown I reached a settlement—a cattle ranch—but evidently not of the highest character. Yes, they would take me in. The woman of the house had a pathetic face, and looked at me searchingly, almost suspiciously.

"‘I am a man of peace,’ I said, in answer to her look, ‘and I have lost my way.’

"‘You look like a preacher,’ one of the men said.

"I bowed my head.

"‘I thought as much,’ he went on, turning to the woman, whose face had brightened up.

"‘I ’ain’t seen a preacher in five years,’ she said. ‘Ain’t you hungry?’

"‘I am, indeed, my sister,’ I said; ‘as hungry as your spirit must be.’

"‘Now you’re shoutin’!’ the man cried, slapping his leg. ‘That’s the way to talk it. I’ve heard ’em a hund’ed times; an’ mammy would always come to me an’ say, sof’ly, “Go kill fo’ chickens, Billy.” I’d know that talk anywhere.

AN EX-BRIGADIER

Golly ! go kill something, 'Liza—a horse—the baby—anythin', an call in all the fellers ; bound to have somethin' to eat. Gosh ! your stomach thinks your throat's cut, don't it, mister ?

"I was wild to laugh, by gad, sir ! the rascal hit the nail so squarely on the head ; but I answered quietly enough, 'I *would* like a little food,' adding, meekly, 'if you have anything to spare.'

"The man went out roaring with laughter, and the woman came close to me.

"'Did you ever marry anybody ?' she asked.

"It gave me a sort of chill for a minute.

"'No,' I answered ; 'I am not married.'

"'That ain't what I mean,' she said. 'Me an' Billy have changed rings, an' promised befo' the boys, an' mean it, too ; but we ain't had no minister nor no magistrate, an' somehow I'd ruther have some words said. It's been three years gone now sence we changed rings.'

"'And you wish me to say a few words ?' I asked, my compunctions fading as the woman's story went on.

"'Yes, if Billy's willin', but he don't like preachers much. He don't believe in 'em ; but I do. I'll ask him,' and she went out.

"This was a position I had not counted on, for the official acts of the clergy had not occurred to me, and for a few moments I wished myself well out of the dilemma ; but I must go on now, for to show these men that I was deceiving them might mean death. So while I waited I trumped up, or tried to trump up, the Episcopal marriage

AN EX-BRIGADIER

service ; but something else would come instead, and looking into the matter afterwards, I discovered it to be the catechism ; but then I knew only that it would not serve my purposes, and I was still at sea when the woman returned.

“This time she was followed by several men, among them ‘Billy.’

“‘Come in, boys,’ he cried, ‘we’re goin’ to have a weddin’, me an’ ‘Liza, an’ that means a supper ; don’t it, ‘Liza? An’ to-morrer we’ll have to loan Brother— What’s your name, mister?’

“‘Stiggins,’ I answered, with a back glance at Mr. Weller.

“‘Stiggins,’ Billy repeated. ‘We’ll have to loan Brother Stiggins a horse. I tell you, boys, it’s a good thing we’ve got somethin’ to drink to-night, an’ me an’ ‘Liza ’ll change rings again.’

“It was a trying moment. To save my life I could not remember anything to begin with, and as the couple took their places in front of me I felt puzzled to death ; but I *could* not fail, and I made a mad dash.

“‘What is your name?’ I asked, solemnly.

“‘Billy Sprowle,’ was answered, promptly.

“‘What is your name?’—to the woman.

“‘‘Liza Dobbs.’

“‘Who gave you that name?’ was the thing that seemed to come next, somehow, but I realized at once that it would not do, so determined on a common-sense question, and asked : ‘Are you both of one mind in this matter? Answer

AN EX-BRIGADIER

as you shall answer at the last great day !' and I let my voice fall into profound depths.

" 'Yes,' came from the couple ; and from the subdued expression of the company I saw that my voice had impressed them. This encouraged me, and I made another grab among my memories.

" 'William, will you have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to have and to hold until death us do part ?' And the words tumbled out so glibly, once I got started, that I left the 'us' unchanged, and recklessly plighted my troth along with them. But they did not notice this, and Billy's 'Yes, sir,' came like a shot. 'Eliza, will you have this man to be thy wedded husband, to have and to hold until death us do part ?' I said once more.

" 'Yes.'

" 'Change rings,' I went on, 'and both of you say, "With this ring I thee wed, from this day forth for evermore."' They obeyed, Billy looking meeker and meeker as the service went on ; then joining their hands, I looked at the company sternly, saying, 'I pronounce William and Eliza Sprowle to be man and wife.'

"By this time lots more of the service had come to me, but somehow I could not bring myself to say it ; it seemed to stick in my throat. But what I *had* said had made an immense impression. Every man there looked at me with something of awe in his eyes, and I heard one whisper, 'A rale sho - 'nuff preacher'; and the answer, 'You bet ; he crawls me.'

AN EX-BRIGADIER

"The ceremony over, I sat down by the fire to wait for further developments, and the men stood about awkwardly. By this time, however, I felt quite in character, and said, in a mild tone, 'Have you much of a settlement here?'

"'Not much,' the oldest man of the group answered, 'an' the nighest neighbors is ten miles off. It's a right lonesome country.'

"'Yes,' I answered, 'but good grass.'

"'That's so, an' free. Billy Sprowle has made a right good thing of comin' out here, him an' these boys; I 'ain't been here long.'

"'Do the Mexicans trouble you much?' I went on.

"'Not as much as they'd like to.' Then with an effort, 'Do you think killin' a Mexican is any harm?'

"'No,' I answered, promptly, then clearing my throat slowly—'no, not if they molest your property.'

"The man passed his hand over his face, looking at me curiously, while I gazed sadly into the fire. After a moment's reflective scanning of me he drew nearer, and, putting his hands in his pockets, stood looking down on me.

"'You've got common-sense, mister,' he said, 'if you *are* a preacher, an' you answered mighty lively at first 'bout killin' Mexicans; you *know* they oughter be wiped off the face of the earth?'

"I gave him look for look. 'My brother,' I said, 'I fought for four years in the war, and, as you see, half of me is in the grave. I don't stand

AN EX-BRIGADIER

back on killing or on being killed when it is necessary. And I like hunting too,' I went on, 'but I don't like to hunt buzzards.'

"'Shake!' he cried, holding out his hand; 'that's good 'bout buzzards; Mexicans an' buzzards *is* one. Sakes-er-mussy!'—turning to the rest—'that's sense, boys, preacher or no preacher.'

"They all drew up after 'this, and sat down near the fire: they had fought, too, and war stories were plenty, and before supper was over we were the firmest friends.

"Next morning, however, after the night's reflection, Billy came to me, confidentially.

"'Are you a sho-'nuff preacher?' he said; 'or did you jest put it up on the old girl? It won't make no diffrence to us boys, you know, an' 'Liza's done eased off 'bout bein' married, an' we won't make her onressless by tellin' her no better—but *are* you a preacher?'

"'Why not?' I asked, drawing myself up. 'What have I done that a preacher should not do?'

"'Oh, nothin'—nothin'!' rather hurriedly; 'only you've got so much horse-sense, an' preachers, you know—'

"'My brother,' I said, gravely, and I laid my hand on his shoulder in a way that would have done credit to an archbishop, 'you don't understand; I got my sense before I was called to be a preacher; I was a man first, and then a preacher. Do you see?'

"'You bet; an' you'll *always* be a man?'

AN EX-BRIGADIER

“‘Always.’

“‘Thet’s good,’ heartily. ‘I’d like to hear you preach.’

“Well, those fellows could not do enough for me ; they lent me a horse that was to be left at the next town ; they rode a long way with me, and Billy gave me a Mexican dollar as a marriage fee. But poor ‘Liza, her gratitude was pathetic, and she brought her little child for me to bless. That got me, rather, but I gave him the best I had ; it was the last blessing my dear old mother gave me ; ‘The Lord bless and keep you, my boy, and bring you home at last,’ she had said. I gave it to the little fellow, and the mother cried. And I did not feel mean a bit for deceiving them, for I had done good. I had made that woman happy, and had raised the clergy in the estimation of these men. To tell you the truth, I felt myself a missionary.

“About sundown I reached a little town, a very small affair, and stopped at the largest house I could find, and the hardest-looking case I had ever seen came to the door. I asked if I could stop there ; he said he would see, and went back into the house. Then a woman came—harder-looking than the man, if that were possible. I told her I was a man of peace, and wanted to spend the night ; that I made a point of going to the houses of the best people in a town, because they would have the most influence, and could help me in my work. That woman’s face was like a flint when I began, but before the

AN EX-BRIGADIER

end of my speech the whole expression had changed.

“‘I ain’t no ‘Piscopal,’ she said, the defiance that had left her face still lingering in her voice.

“‘Of course not,’ I answered, glibly. ‘I take you to be a Wash-foot Baptist.’

“‘How’d you know that?’ she cried.

“‘There’s a look in your face,’ I said.

“‘My soul an’ body! Come in,’ and she flung the door wide. She put me in a very decent room, and presently I heard wild shouting and a cannonade of sticks and stones. As I had distrusted both the man and the woman, I was startled for a second, but the screech of a chicken restored my equilibrium. ‘Fried chicken for the preacher,’ I said to myself, and determined that I must become accustomed to that side of the ministerial life—and a very good side too. In a marvellously short time I was called to supper.

“‘I s’pose you don’t mind havin’ a bate,’ the woman said; ‘so I jest killed a chicken, and knocked up a few biscuit.’

“I did have a little feeling that the chicken was scarcely dead, and that the biscuit had rather a jaundiced look; but I had been intimate with starvation too long to be fastidious, and I ate with a will; and as I remember it now, the coffee was not bad.

“‘Is you goin’ to have a meetin’?’ was the woman’s first question as I took my seat at table. ‘I ’member you said somethin’ ’bout your work,

AN EX-BRIGADIER

an' we 'ain't had nothin' but 'Piscopal religion here for a long time.'

"'And you don't like it?' I parried.

"'No, I don't; there ain't no grit to it; I want my religion to have some sperrit; I'd ruther have a revival now than money; and the 'Piscopals jest keep right along quiet an' easy, an' I 'ain't got no mo' patience with 'em. I'm tired.'

"'Is there a clergyman here?'

"'No; he's dead. He come for his health, an' worked an' died 'bout a month ago; we 'ain't had nothin' sence; but if you're a Baptist preacher, there's nothin' henders why you can't have a meetin'.'

"'If you think so—'

"'Yes, I *do* think so: you look like you kin preach.'

"'Yes, I think I can.'

"'Then I'll send John out. John! I say, John!'

"The man who had opened the door for me came in.

"'I want you to go round this town, John,' she began, 'an' tell the folks that Brother— What's your name?'

"'Stiggins.'

"'That Brother Stiggins will have a meetin' to-morrer, startin' right early.'

"John looked at me slowly, then said the one word, 'Piscopal?'

"'No!' and the woman looked as amiable as a sitting hen. 'Ain't you got *no* sense, John Blye? Did you *ever* see a 'Piscopal look like him? He

AN EX-BRIGADIER

looks like he's got grit. Go 'long an' tell Brother Williams to come over an' help 'range 'bout it; go 'long.'

"I must confess I felt rather queer as the combat thickened round me. After all, suppose I could not preach? And I said, mildly, 'Is Brother Williams a good preacher?'

"'No, he ain't'—frankly; 'but he's a mighty good prayer. I've heard him pray right along for a hour, an' it never seemed like he drawed a breath. Yes, he's a mighty upliftin' prayer; he'll help you, don't you fret. Jest you preach, an' hit hard too, an' Brother Williams he'll raise all the hymns an' do the prayin'; an' he does line out hymns beautiful.'

"This made me more comfortable, and it was easy enough to arrange matters with Brother Williams, a small, red-headed man—a druggist—with a long red nose that he used as a speaking-trumpet. Very soon he and Sister Blye had arranged all the details; even the hymns were chosen, and nine o'clock the hour fixed on. I was awfully tired; but I chose my text, and dreamed out my sermon, for by morning the whole thing was in my mind—a grand thing, with enough fire and brimstone in it to destroy the universe. 'Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched'—that was my text. I tell you, Willoughby, I have often thought that I missed my vocation in not being a preacher. If you could hear me once, I believe you would be converted yourself. By Jove, sir! all the

AN EX-BRIGADIER

town was there the next morning, in a big place like a barn, which all creeds used in common. Brother Williams was there, and his nose looked longer and redder than before.

"We started them off with a hymn; then Brother Williams prayed: such a prayer! It was ridiculous, sir! I was dying to laugh. If you could have heard his instructions to the Almighty, and his fault-finding too: it was awful. But Sister Blye—the way in which she groaned and grunted over Brother Williams's presentation of the shortcomings of the Lord was edifying in the extreme. Then we had another hymn—a regular dynamite fuse; but nobody showed any signs of religion except Sister Blye. Then I began. I began quietly, but in the deepest voice I could muster. First, I gave a picture of heaven, quoting Milton copiously; but my audience was quiet under that, and I realized that they were in a coolly critical frame of mind. Further, I realized that *I* had no idea of heaven, or eternal bliss, or *anything* eternal for that matter. I could not conceive of heavenly bliss, for the happiest moments of my life had been passed in battle. I tell you there's nothing like the rush and madness of a charge, and you know that is no vision of heaven. I think I failed in my description of heaven; so, according to my plan, I came down to this life. I knew that through and through, and I flayed humanity alive and rubbed salt in. Then they began to prick up their ears, and Sister Blye looked uneasy. I

AN EX-BRIGADIER

liked to see it, and a determination came over me to do a little good, if possible. And I believe I did. I gave them the devil for a good half-hour, straight from the shoulder. Then I dropped down to hell, and *then* I made the fur fly! I knew sin and remorse;" and the general's face grew grave, and he laid his hand on his daughter's shoulder. "Yes, I knew hell better than heaven; it came easy, and I drew it strong. In twenty minutes that place was like Bedlam. I have never heard or seen anything like it, and never want to again. Such howls and screams and shouting! I did not know what to do exactly, for nobody could hear me, so I stopped and sat down. Well, sir, little Williams, who had been lying flat on the floor, howling, hopped up as spry as a cricket, and lined out a hymn. It was the best thing he could have done; it served as a vent for the excitement, and they sang with a will. Then he prayed, and exhorted people to come up and be prayed for; in fact, he got up a first-class revival on top of my sermon; then he took up a collection, to pay my expenses, he said. I don't know how much was given him, but I think he and Sister Blye got a very good return for their labors; they gave me five dollars. I refused to preach any more that day, and told them I must go on. Well, sir, people followed me to the next town—followed to hear me preach again, they said. There was a real Baptist preacher there, a very good fellow, who kept a shoe shop. He was delighted with the thought of a revival;

AN EX-BRIGADIER

and he and Sister Blye and little Williams arranged the programme. I had caught on to their methods by this time, and determined to take up my own collections. I did the work, and was determined to get my pay. We were in that town three days, and every one of them field-days. You never saw the like ; such a raging, tearing time I have never conceived of. But the funny part was that when the collecting time came, and I started out on my own hook, Sister Blye and Williams and the other preacher all dashed after me full tilt, and it was simply a race ; but many refused to give to any one but me, which made me have fewer compunctions about taking the money, for it showed me that they understood each other.

“By Jove, sir, at the end of three days everybody wanted to be baptized, and I nearly exploded when their own preacher told them that there was not enough water anywhere short of the Gulf to wash away their sins, but that he would do the best he could for them in the water-hole outside the town.

“I did not take any hand in that : the official acts I did not touch, nor did I ever pray in public ; but I did not see any harm in telling them their sins, and in making them wish they had never been born because of the fright I put them in. It was pitiful. But I did good ; I know I did good ; and I made money. By this time I had learned all the tricks of the trade, and my brother preacher proposed that we should agree

AN EX-BRIGADIER

to work Texas for three months, I doing the preaching, and he doing everything else ; that we should dismiss Sister Blye and Williams immediately, and divide the proceeds into two parts instead of four. That fellow—Stallings was his name—was something of a wag, and he told Williams and Sister Blye that we had entered into a partnership, and did not want them any more ; that we had concluded to stop the circus business and teach religion.

“ It was astonishing how much money we made after that, and how wonderfully successful we were. The papers took us up : ‘ Stallings and Stiggins,’ and their grand revivals ; their preaching and praying and singing, and the rest of it. We went from town to town in style, lived on the fat of the land, and had as many horses as we wanted. And I added a postscript to my sermons that any people who changed their creeds under stress of excitement were renegades and fools. I wish you could have seen Stallings’s face the first time I tacked that on ; but it took like wild-fire. All the preachers in that town came to hear me, and thanked me for my sermons ; and after that Stallings and I gave something always to every Protestant church in every town, with always the proviso that it was to go to the preacher’s salary—that much extra. Well, that got out, and the effect was miraculous : money flowed in. Don’t you see that I did good ? Then the scoldings I gave ! By gad, sir, they should have taken the skin off. Bless your heart, how I

AN EX-BRIGADIER

went for the people for not doing their duty by the ministry ! Why, Dante's lowest round was nothing to what I promised them if they did not do better.

"But the end of it all was wonderful. We were at a little town not far from the Louisiana line, and I was preaching fire and brimstone for dear life, when a face in the congregation caught my eye. It was the saddest face I had ever seen : past middle age, with sunken cheeks and silver hair. But it was the eyes that took hold of me—big, pitiful brown eyes that looked hunted and starved.

"After I had seen that face I could not preach anything but comfort and hope : I could not say anything hard to that woman. When I came out she was waiting at the door.

"‘I want to speak to you,’ she said, and took hold of my arm. ‘You come from my part of the country—I know it by your voice—and you are a gentleman, if you are—’ And she paused.

"‘If I *am* an itinerant preacher,’ I put in.

"‘Yes ; it does seem strange to me,’ she answered, frankly ; ‘but you *are* a gentleman, and you come from the South Atlantic coast.’

"‘Yes,’ I admitted, beginning to feel thoroughly ashamed of my position ; ‘and is there anything I can do for you?’

"‘I have come to you for help,’ she answered, tremulously, ‘because I seemed to recognize you in some way ; and yet your name is not a coast name—Stiggins—I have never heard it.’

AN EX-BRIGADIER

“‘Outside of *Pickwick*,’ I amended. ‘But where do you live? Can I go home with you and talk to you?’

“‘Just around the corner: we have one room. Yes, you can come: my daughter is there.’

“In five minutes we reached the room—a poor, miserable little place, but absolutely clean—and sitting there sewing, a young girl, not more than eighteen. She looked up in surprise.

“‘Mamma!’ she said, and I seemed to hear my own little sister speaking, so familiar were the accents.

“‘This is Mr. Stiggins, dear, the preacher; he comes from home, and will help us.’ Then motioning me to a seat, she went on: ‘My name is Vernon—one of the South Carolina Vernons, you know.’

“‘And your maiden name?’ I asked, rising in astonishment.

“‘Asheburton?’

“‘Marion Asheburton?’

“‘Yes,’ her eyes dilating with wonder.

“‘And a long time ago, when I was a little boy, you were engaged to Jack Stamper, and he died?’

“‘Yes—oh yes! Who *are* you?’

“‘Willie,’ I said—‘Willie Stamper, the little brother: don’t you remember?’

“‘How, then, is your name Stiggins?’ said the daughter, severely. But the mother asked no questions, needed no proofs; she simply fell on my neck, and cried as if her heart would break.

AN EX-BRIGADIER

You see she had gone back to her first love, and her first sorrow—had gone back to days when prosperity and luxury were the rule. Poor thing! poor thing! Then our stories came out—hers pitiful beyond compare; mine, that seemed to grow more vulgar and disgraceful as I told it. The telling of that story was an awful grind until the girl laughed—the sweetest laugh I had ever heard. God bless her! They were destitute—these Vernons—had moved to Texas, and the father had died, leaving the mother and child to struggle alone, poor things! When I met them they had not tasted food for twenty-four hours. I took charge of them at once, and sent them over to New Orleans to wait for me. I had a good deal of money by that time, but could not break my engagement with Stallings, and it lacked a month of being out. But I preached for all I was worth that last month, and tears and dollars came like rain; and at the last I had literally to run away from Stallings. He said we would make our fortunes if we stayed together; but I explained to him that I was not so anxious about making money as I was about looking up some heathen I knew across the Mississippi. So we parted, and I left Texas with two hundred dollars in my pocket, besides what I had sent Mrs. Vernon.

“Well, we were married—the girl and I—and came home here to Alabama, where I have managed to live ever since. But I have never been as rich as I was when I was a preacher, for all

AN EX-BRIGADIER

my expenses were paid, I had horses to ride, I lived on the fat of the land, and had more clothes made for me by adoring sisters than ever since. It was a wonderful time. Agnes here thinks it was disgraceful, but she laughs sometimes when I tell the old story, just as her mother did. They are forgotten now, those happy-go-lucky old days, and my little wife lived only a year—only a year."

The fire seemed to burn low as the old gentleman paused, and the girl laid her head on his shoulder.

"But I *have* lived," and he drew a long sigh. "Yea, verily, life was worth living when I first set out; and the war"—shaking his head—"I would not take anything for those years of excitement; by gad, sir, that was life, sure enough! And just after the war it was not so very bad; there was some novelty in being poor, just at first, before we learned to strive and grind; but now the grind is awful—perfectly awful! For everybody is grinding now, rich and poor, old and young. Rich people do not stop to enjoy, because they want more, and poor people cannot stop to enjoy, because they have nothing. We have lost the art of being satisfied—an art the South used to possess to a ruinous extent. We are losing the art of having fun, the art of enjoying simple things. We are learning to be avaricious, for now in the South position is coming to depend on money; so all grind along together; and I hate it."

AN EX-BRIGADIER

"But when you sell Booker City, papa," suggested the daughter, with an earnest faith in word and look, "then you will have enough?"

The twinkle came back to the general's eye, and he tossed off the last of his toddy with a wave of the hand.

"That is true, little girl—when I sell Booker City."

But I did not want to talk of Booker City, and the keen old fellow noticed it, and cocking his head on one side, he said:

"You don't believe in Booker City?"

"I don't know anything about it," I answered; "but I believe in *you*."

"And so you *may*, my boy"—heartily; "and I tell you Booker City has a grand future."

I lifted my hand. "Don't tell me," I said, "until I tell you." Then I blurted out my story. "Of course I will resign," I finished, "and they may send another man."

The general rubbed his chin. "Don't be rash," he said. "Write your chief the whole story; let him recall you; let him come out himself if he likes. To resign because I happen to be a friend of your father is a 'befo'-de-wah' sensitiveness which we cannot afford now. That fine old sensitiveness! It was silly sometimes, but exquisite. We cannot afford it now, however; and by the time we can afford it we will have been made so tough in the grind for money that we will have lost the cuticle necessary to it. That is the reason it takes three generations to make a

AN EX-BRIGADIER

gentleman. For myself, I don't think he can be made under five or six. However, accepting the proposition, the first generation cannot afford to be a gentleman; the second generation might be able to afford it, but don't know how; the third generation can afford it, and maybe has learned the outward semblance, and so the saying has come. But to have all the 'ear-marks,' to have the thing come naturally, to have it so bred in the bone that a man can't help being a gentleman, and has hands and feet and ears all to match—that kind of thing takes five or six generations. And even after six generations I have seen the 'old Adam' crop out in broad thumbs or big ears.

"Now you have all the points, Willoughby, but you cannot afford that 'befo'-de-wah sensitiveness. Don't resign, but tell your story, and give your honest impressions; for the first generation cannot afford even a comfortable lie; it requires 'a hundred earls' to let a man lie with impunity. Humanity is still too crude—all except the French and Africans—to put up with a lie, except under very extraordinary circumstances of success or position. So after you have seen Booker City, and have heard all my plans, then write; but don't resign because you happen to find a friend in me, and so may be suspected of collusion. If you have no idea of collusion, don't be afraid of suspicion. Tell him that I am your friend; then, if he suspects you, he will send another fellow down; but if he has any sense he

AN EX-BRIGADIER

will not send to supersede *you*. If he does, why you come over to my party—me and George Washington Stamper Booker”—laughing—“and by gad, sir, we’ll work those fellows for all they are worth; we’ll never let them rest until our fortunes are made, and Booker City is the London and Paris and New York and Chicago and Rome and Athens and everything else of the South all rolled into one, not to leave out Pittsburgh and Boston—yes, sir; and we’ll invite your chief down, and we’ll take him to drive with Jupiter and the mule, and tell him about those palmy days in Texas over a good hot toddy, and by Jove, sir, he’ll be one of us in twenty-four hours! We’ll make him build a memorial for Sister Blye, and save a corner lot for Stallings. Just let him dare to supersede you, and so help me over the fence if I am not such a friend to him as will make him wish he’d never been born. I have not forgotten how to preach, and I’ll make that old Dives think he’s reached an infinite prairie on an infinite August day and not a water-hole in sight; but don’t you resign.”

I took the general’s advice; but it was a hard letter to write, and I am afraid it was a little stiff. Nevertheless the general was right; I was not superseded, and in time my chief did take a drive with Jupiter and the mule, and heard the story of the Texas days told as no pen on earth can write it.

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

THERE is a certain family likeness in all small country towns that is quite consistent with a wide divergence in manners and customs, and one thing common to all is a "leading citizen." He is generally a good man, for after all it is the upright who best weather the storm and find permanent haven in the faith of their fellow-men.

The town of Greenville, like all her family, was extremely self-important, and when her "leading citizen," Mr. Joshua Kayley—commonly called Squire Kayley—was sent to Congress, Greenville became absolutely sure of the large place she filled in the public eye, and felt glad for the rest of the world that a teacher should go out from such a place as Greenville. In return, Squire Kayley felt deeply grateful for the honor done him; was proud of his town, of his county, and of his State, and went to his post determined to do all possible credit to his native region.

As has been intimated, Squire Kayley was an upright man; he was also a modest and an observant man, honestly desirous of thinking and

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

doing right, and when he reached Washington he found much food for thought. He did not make many remarks during his term of office, but in a quiet way he made many investigations, and arrived at some astonishing conclusions. He found, among other things, that the West and the South were looked on as being uncivilized because of what in those regions were called "difficulties," not to speak of lynchings and other modes of supplementing the law.

He found out, also, that in quieter regions, instead of "a word and a blow," people brought action for "assault and battery," and "alienating affections," and "breach of promise," and the rest of it—delicate matters which in his experience had always been settled by a bullet or a caning. Not being a blood-thirsty man, he pondered much on these things, and determined at last that he would try the experiment of making his native town more law-abiding. It was a herculean task, and he had serious doubts as to his success, but he was determined to try, for although Greenville could not boast that every man in her graveyard had died with his boots on, she could nevertheless bring to mind a long list of sons who had begun their march on the "lonely road" well shod.

He was sitting on the hotel piazza with a number of his constituents one afternoon after his return home, and while a negro handed about glasses filled with a topaz-colored mixture, crushed ice, mint, and straws, Squire Kayley told this story :

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

"A man up yonder," he began, "made some remarks about another man, a stranger from another region of the country; a few days afterwards the man was on the cars when the stranger walked up to him and, taking him by the nose, pulled him all the way down the car."

"Gosh!" exclaimed one listener.

"Did you stay for the funeral?" asked another.

"He didn't shoot," Squire Kayley answered, "he brought in a charge of assault and battery, and got two thousand dollars damages."

His audience groaned.

"You needn't groan," the Squire went on, with a steadiness in his tone and words such as a man puts into his actions when he is about to light a fuse—"that fellow had a level head. He had followed so quick that his nose wasn't hurt, and two thousand dollars is a lots better poultice for a man's honor than a fellow-man's blood."

A dead silence followed this remark, and Squire Kayley, tilting his chair back against the wall, pulled gently at the straw in his glass. After a few moments a young fellow sitting on the railing of the piazza asked:

"An' you'd sue for damages, Squire?"

"I ain't sure, Nick," Squire Kayley answered, slowly. "I hope I won't be tried, but I think the fellow had a level head."

"An' two thousand dollars is a heap er money," said another young fellow, thoughtfully.

"'Tain't so much the money, Loftus," the Squire answered, "as not shedding blood.

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

They're lots more peaceable up yonder than we are, and they haven't got it by killing each other, either; and they're lots richer, too, and a good deal of it has come through being law-abiding."

"Dang my soul, if you ain't changed!" cried an old fellow, jerking his rocking-chair round so as to face Squire Kayley. "I'd noticed that you'd smoothed your words a heap, an' had cut your hair short, an' shaved your face clean, but I hedn't looked for no fu'ther change, an' this is too much when you say you'd let a feller pull yo' nose an' be satisfied with two thousand dollars."

"I'd let you pull it for one, Uncle Adam," Squire Kayley answered, smiling.

There was a general laugh, but not a hearty one, for their leading citizen was announcing doctrines that would have branded any other townsman as a coward.

"There was another man," the Squire went on; "a fellow began to carry on with his wife; we'll suppose that he did what he could to stop it, then, after watching a while and seeing that things were hopeless, he brought action for alienating his wife's affections, and gained his suit and five thousand dollars."

"Damn it, man, you didn't think *that* was right?" Uncle Adam cried again, growing very red in the face, while the other listeners looked at the Squire pleadingly, as if imploring him not to commit himself beyond redemption.

"Why not?" the Squire asked, taking another pull at his straw—"nothing could heal the hurt

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

the woman had done him—and a woman as far gone as that didn't deserve to have blood spilled for her—and to leave her on the other fellow's hands, at the same time taking away his money, seems to me the most dismal punishment on the face of the earth."

"But, Squire, could you have held yourself?" cried Nick.

"I ain't sure," the Squire answered, again, "and I won't be tried, being a bachelor; but that fellow had a level head."

Loftus did not venture to remark again on the money, and Uncle Adam and the others having sunk into wondering silence, the Squire went on:

"There was a fellow engaged to a girl; first thing she knew he was married to another girl; she sued for breach of promise and got her money."

"Fur God's sake, Joshua Kayley!" Uncle Adam pleaded, for the third time, and now with a tone of despair in his voice, "you wouldn't er let yo' daughter do thet?"

The Squire shook his head. "No," he said, "seeing I'm a bachelor, I wouldn't; but I *do* draw the line there. I don't know what I'd do to a man who should ill-treat my daughter, if I had one—but *she* shouldn't do anything; all the same, the girl had a level head. And I'll tell you," he went on, rising to his feet and waving his glass to emphasize his words—"I'll tell you that the people up yonder have got the right end of the stick. You'll not get peace nor honor by kill-

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

ing people, and you'll not make money by paying lawyers to defend you in murder trials—and we don't gain credit nor bring capital to our country by riots and difficulties; and they call us barbarous and uncivilized, they do, and we've got to change—we've got to become law-abiding. I love Greenville, and I love you all, and you've all got to help me change this town. God knows, and you know, that I ain't a coward, and if you could hear them talk about us and our ways, and read their papers about us and our doings, you'd try to help me ;" and he resumed his seat.

There was a moment's silence, then Uncle Adam brought his hand down sharply on the arm of his chair.

"It's no use talkin', Josh," he said, "we ain't been raised that way, an' we ain't a goin' to change into no pulin' complainers to the law, nor patch up our dishonor with money. Why, Josh, even the niggers would scorn such talk, an' for the land's sake, stop it !"

There was a chuckle from the doorway, where the negro waiter had paused to listen.

Squire Kayley turned. "You there, Sam?" he said. "I'm glad of it, you can help me, too; you can go and tell the niggers what I say, and tell 'em I'm right."

The negro bent double over his waiter as if with restrained mirth. "Lawd, Boss," he said, "'tain't no use talkin' to niggers; it's too easy furrum to shoot en run, en dat's w'at a nigger 'll do ev'y time."

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

"An' the whites 'll shoot an' stan' to it!" cried Uncle Adam; "an' you've gone all wrong, Josh."

Squire Kayley shook his head.

"No, Uncle Adam," he answered, "I'm right. People, and 'specially boys, seem to think that there's some kind of glory in defending what they call their honor, and half the time it's bad temper or bad liquor. But there's no glory in a cold-blooded lawsuit, and if they knew that they'd have to go into court and have their lives and their characters turned inside out, they'd control themselves a little better."

A tall young woman, very much overdressed, was seen coming down the street on the other side. Nick slipped off the railing on to the pavement, and, stepping across quickly, joined her. The group on the hotel piazza was silent, watching the couple out of sight.

Then Uncle Adam said:

"It beats me why Nick Tobin's wife is forever passin' this hotel. To my certain knowledge she's been by three times to-day."

"Maybe she has business down-town," suggested the Squire.

"Loftus Beesley's smilin' like he knows," was another suggestion.

Uncle Adam nudged Loftus.

"Not long ago," he said, "we mighter thought it was 'cause Loftus was a settin' here."

"Well, she's gone," said Squire Kayley, sharply; "and I can't see how it's our business what she's gone for."

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

Uncle Adam looked at the speaker for a moment, the color mounting to his face.

"It seems to me, Joshua Kayley," he answered, "thet you're losin' yo' mind. If I choose to make it my business who passes this hotel, I'm goin' to make it my business; an' if I choose to say thet Nick Tobin's wife spen's her life gaddin' roun' these streets, I'm goin' to say it; an' I'll add thet when Nick's in town she *does* spen' her time on the streets, an' when he's travellin', or with his firm, over in the city, she spen's it at home receivin' the boys. An' fu'thermo' Loftus is one o' them boys; an' I'll instruct you again—Nick suspicions it, an' he leaves the Seelye boys, his own cousins, on guard when he's gone, 'cause Nick's got no man to help him, an' the girl's own people can't do nothin' with her—now, what do you say?"

"That I'm mighty sorry for Nick," Squire Kayley answered, quietly; "he's a good fellow, a little hasty, but straight, and the least his friends can do is not to trifle with his wife behind his back, nor make her the subject of public comments; and I'll stand by Nick, and I'll stand by her for his sake. We all ought to."

Loftus moved uneasily, then joined Uncle Adam, who had risen, and, with a very much disgusted expression, stood looking down on Squire Kayley.

"I wish yo' new doctrines good luck, Josh," the old man said, sarcastically; "but I'm an ole bottle, an' the preacher says new wine busts ole

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

bottles, an' I'm 'fraid o' bustin' if I takes in any mo', an' then you'd bring a suit for damages, so I'm goin'."

Squire Kayley laughed.

"You can't make me mad, Uncle Adam," he said, "and you can say anything you please. Some day you'll see that I'm right."

Of course Squire Kayley's new doctrines were the town's talk in a few hours, and the women with one accord took his part.

Squire Kayley was right, they declared, was always right, and if he had broken up that hotbed of scandal that collected every afternoon on the hotel piazza he had done a good work. Women scarcely liked to pass the hotel, and although Letty Tobin deserved to be talked about because of her scandalous behavior with Loftus Beesley, still they were glad that the Squire had spoken plainly, even if in so doing he had taken Letty's part. Further, if he could persuade their sons and husbands to stop bullying each other, they would look on him as their deliverer from many anxieties and evils, and they would try to help him.

The next thing Greenville knew, an action for assault and battery was brought by Sam, the waiter at the hotel, against Uncle Adam Dozier, the autocrat of the hotel piazza.

The excitement was intense.

Of course Sam had come at once to Squire Kayley, and of course Squire Kayley could not refuse the case. He did his best to persuade

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

Sam from it, for Uncle Adam had often before whacked Sam with his walking-stick, but though perfectly amiable, Sam stood to his point.

The town was in a fume. Squire Kayley's popularity wasted like snow under a July sun, and there were no words capable of expressing Uncle Adam's sensations, nor any reputable printer who would have put his language into type.

The women, hitherto solid for Squire Kayley as the man in town who stood next to the clergy in the matter of uprightness, were divided, for though they detested Uncle Adam as an old reprobate with an unscrupulous tongue—still, the case was a negro against a white man, which brought many feelings other than justice into full play.

However, through it all, Squire Kayley was "quiet and peaceable and full of compassion," and he gained his case, and Sam his money, and Uncle Adam, having exhausted his vocabulary, took out his vengeance in an ostentatious and belligerent avoidance of the Squire.

But time, humanity's one patent medicine that really cures all, soothed Uncle Adam, and as Sam had discreetly disappeared, the old man resumed his position on the hotel piazza, where each day he used Squire Kayley's new doctrines as a peg on which to hang an ever-enlarging book of lamentations over the old times, and declared that since Sam's victory "every nigger in town was tryin' to git licked, which would be mighty good for them but for the money which the Squire hed

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

attached. For everybody knew that a thrashin' was a nigger's bes' frien', while money was a pit-fall of danger"—but that "the nex' time *he* hit, he'd hit to kill, then Josh Kayley could have the pleasure of puttin' him in the penitentiary." Furthermore he said that he hoped "thet no other Greenville man would ever go to Washington if it was goin' to ruin him like it had ruined Josh. Josh had gone away an ole-time gen'leman, but only the omniscient Almighty knew what he had changed into 'fore he got back." The occurrence had its effect, however, as object-lessons always do, and, as the Squire observed, "Uncle Adam had ceased his gentle play with his walking-stick."

Greenville resumed its deadly stillness after this, until the first cold snap in the autumn waked up the young people to a sense of the beauty of dances and candy-pullings, causing them to drive long distances to country places or to neighboring settlements to find a sufficient amount of amusement.

Of course Mrs. Grundy waked up, too, and while allowing them to have the most unquestioned freedom, the gossips kept a viciously strict account of the young people's fallings from grace, and especially were their eyes fixed on Letty Tobin, Nick's wife.

That Letty was beautiful no one denied, and her marriage to Nick Tobin had been an astonishment to all who knew her. Nick himself had been somewhat surprised, for up to the moment

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

of her acceptance she had treated his loyal service as something of a joke, giving all her favors to other young men, especially to Loftus Beesley, who, for Greenville, was rich.

Nobody understood this sudden change of front, and all prophesied that the marriage would never take place. But it did, and in his love and gratitude Nick swore that if love and devotion could make Letty happy she should never have cause to repent her choice. And work he did, even Letty's mother declaring that he "spoiled the girl to death."

As Nick "travelled" for a firm in a neighboring city, he could be very little at home, which was declared to be "unfortunate," especially as Letty lived alone, declining even the company of her own sisters, who, doomed to the country, would have been very glad of a change to town.

Nick's comings and goings were uncertain also, but he came home as often and stayed as long as possible, meanwhile leaving to his cousins, Ben and Reub Seelye, the care of his wife and his home.

They had been married for a year now, and Nick had not yet entirely recovered from his surprise at his luck, for, besides being a modest fellow, his mind was as slow as his temper was quick. But when this first cold snap came, and all the young people of the town waked up to the delights of this weather that was so ideal for merrymaking, Nick was away, and Ben Seelye found himself very unhappy about his cousin's wife and about the talk that was so rife concerning her.

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

There was nothing that he could have proved, and yet he knew, and every one else knew, that things were not as they should be, and that Loftus Beesley was the man.

One morning Ben walked into Squire Kayley's office, pale, and somewhat breathless.

"What's- up?" the Squire asked, at once, not even suggesting that his visitor should be seated.

Ben held out a telegram. "Nick's coming," he said, "and Letty's not here."

"Where is she?"

"We all drove over to Pinehollow last night to a candy-pulling," Ben explained, "and some of us stayed over all night at Colonel Bolles's; but this morning when I reached town I found that Letty had not come. She and Loftus left Bolles's a little ahead of me, and took the road home, so that I felt safe; but John Brewin says that she and Loftus turned off on the Valley Creek pike, and told him to tell me they'd be back by five o'clock—and—and Nick is 'most here now!"

"Well?" queried the Squire.

"Well, it'll be death to somebody," Ben answered.

The Squire walked about a little bit with his hands in his pockets, then paused to look out of the window.

"It shall not come to that," he said, at last; "there's no harm in the girl's going to a picnic; and if you'll meet Nick and tell him about it quietly, it'll be all right."

"If it was any other fellow but Loftus," Ben answered.

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

"Is Nick jealous of Loftus?"

"I don't know; but Loftus is so careful when Nick's at home that it makes a fellow think, an' when Nick's away, not a day passes but he sees Letty."

"And I've known that girl since she was a child," the Squire said, as if to himself, again pausing to look out of the window. After a moment he turned—"If she comes at five," he continued, "we can smooth it, but a girl who deceives her husband systematically may not come home at five."

Ben groaned.

The Squire sat down again, and there was silence in the little office until the Squire roused himself with a deep sigh.

"Well," he said, "you go and meet Nick and explain things as lightly as you can, and if she does not come at five you bring Nick here; I'll be here late this evening." And Ben went off.

Five o'clock found Nick and Ben waiting patiently at Nick's house; at six o'clock Reub Seelye joined them; at seven, Nick was lying on his bed, tied, with Ben seated beside him, while Reub went for Squire Kayley.

"He tried to kill himself," Reub said, "an' we had to tie him."

When Squire Kayley entered the room Nick was attaching every oath he had ever heard to Loftus Beesley's name, and doing it with a deliberate, monotonous carefulness that was almost rhythmical and truly awful.

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

"That's no good," the Squire said, quietly, standing over him with his hands in his pockets, "and I'm ashamed to see you lying here tied like a beast. Untie him, boys."

Nick got up and shook himself.

"You've got no right to behave as if your wife had sinned," the Squire went on; "any accident might have kept them; if you loved her you'd not treat her with this dishonor."

"She's been two days, an' this 'll be two nights, with Loftus Beesley!" Nick cried.

"True; but last night she was with all the party at Colonel Bolles's, perfectly respectable and legitimate, and now she may come in at any moment and give a perfectly clear account of herself; and even if she does not come until morning, she may be stopping with some friend—"

Nick struck his hands together.

"Then she'll have to stop away altogether!"

"Not at all," the Squire returned; "you must give her every chance to clear herself; she's young, and beautiful, and fond of admiration and gayety, and that kind of woman has a thousand temptations that a quieter kind never dreams of. She had the choice of every unmarried man in this town—" the Squire hesitated a moment, then added—"even of your humble servant, and out of all she selected you—"

Nick turned quickly—"You, too, Squire?" he asked.

The Squire nodded. "And I love her enough

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

still," he added, "to insist that justice be done her."

The evening wore on. The town clock struck nine—then ten—then the Squire sent Reub Seelye out to the house of Letty's mother, to see if she was there.

It was a long ride, and until Reub returned, after midnight, the Squire managed to keep Nick quiet, but when a negative answer came Nick was almost beside himself, and Squire Kayley had to compromise, giving up the point that Nick must let his wife come home, and advising, instead, that he should pack all Letty's belongings, and in the morning send them to her mother's house and, leaving Ben Seelye to meet the couple, come to Squire Kayley's place outside the town. For, at any cost, Nick and Loftus must be kept apart.

"Don't receive her," he said, "but give her a chance to clear herself."

"And Loftus?" Nick snarled between his teeth.

"What's Loftus done?" the Squire asked—"Letty's not the kind to be led—nor driven."

"If Loftus blames her I'll kill him."

"No, we are not going to have any bloodshed," the Squire went on; "if you can't hold yourself, I'll hold you. If I can't do any better I'll put you in jail."

Nick laughed long and loud, then burst into tears—"I love her so!" he cried, "I love her so!"

"Of course you do," his mentor answered. "And first thing you know it 'll be all right."

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

Daylight found Reub Seelye, with Letty's trunks, being driven out to Mrs. Purdy's; Squire Kayley and Nick on their way to the country, and Ben Seelye, with a note in his pocket, and the key of Nick's house, on his way home to breakfast.

But, alas! as the day wore on and Ben did not come with news of Letty's arrival, Nick became almost wild; then the Squire tried to soothe him into quiet with talk of a divorce.

"You think she's too far gone to shed blood for," Nick said, at last, his voice grown low and weak from weariness—"that's what you said about that other woman at the North; you want me to sue Loftus for his money, and let him have Letty? Great God!"

"Do you want her?"

"But Loftus," Nick reiterated—"leave her to Loftus!"

"Humanity's strange," the Squire began, slowly; "let 'em have what they want, and ten to one they don't want it. Letty belongs to you, and that makes her the one thing on earth that Loftus wants. You belong to Letty, and that cheapens you in her sight. Let her go—that minute your value will double, and, like Esau, she'll shed many and bitter tears for what she threw away. Let her go; and Loftus will wonder what it was that made him so crazy. There's nothing makes a man feel so God-forsaken as to be left to follow his own evil courses—as to say to him, 'You've hurt me beyond help—take what you've been striving for and go your

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

way'—and right then and there the tip-top apple on the tree that he's been fighting for turns to dust and ashes in his mouth, and he can never—never—never get you and your maimed life out of his heart. But just lift one finger to revenge yourself, and you lift the burden from his heart on to your own. Let 'em go, boy, wash your hands clean of 'em, and after a while peace will come to you—peace such as you've never dreamed of. But not to them, they'll have entered on a new lease of tribulation—for 'what ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' I'm not much of a preaching Christian," he went on, in a lower tone, "but there's one thing I've read in Scripture—just a few words—'Are not all these things written in Thy book?'"

Nick sat silent, his arms crossed on the table and his head bowed on them. No food had passed his lips, and he was faint and weary, and for a little while he seemed to see as Squire Kayley saw, and so he fell into the deep sleep of exhaustion.

Just as the sun was setting Ben Seelye rode slowly into the yard and around to the stable, and the Squire stepped out very carefully, so as not to waken Nick.

"She's come," Ben said, "an' when she read the note she laughed a little, then she turned right white, and gave it to Loftus—"

"And Loftus?"

"He looked like a rooster with his tail feathers pulled out, an' said he thought he'd better leave

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

town for a while, and then he looked at me and sorter straightened up, and asked Letty—'What do *you* want me to do?' an' she said, 'Leave town;' then he turned to get into his buggy, an' I told him he'd better drive Letty out to her mother's, 'cause the servants were gone an' the house locked up, an' all Letty's things were out there waitin' for her. It was pretty bad; but they did what I said, an' I rode my horse right behind 'em through the town, an' everybody stared, an' nobody spoke, not even Uncle Adam Dozier. It was bad. Loftus leaves at seven o'clock, if Nick 'll only sleep till then."

Never in the annals of Greenville had there been such excitement as when Nick Tobin sued Loftus Beesley for alienating his wife's affections.

The whole town and county—men, women, and children—rose in a solid, clamoring body against Squire Kayley. Women who had often torn poor Letty's character into ribbons now rallied around her, declaring that to bring a woman into such unheard-of publicity, into court, subjecting her even to the evidence of her negro servants, was to destroy not only all the old and time-honored customs, but to subvert society.

Uncle Adam proclaimed that any man in Nick's position who did not shoot his rival was a coward, and that if Squire Kayley had not meddled, it would all have been arranged as of old; Loftus decently buried and his money left to his family, Nick could have come back, and

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

everybody would have been his friend; and Letty—well, Letty would have been a “grass widder” with a bad name. Now Squire Kayley’s methods had turned the two sinners into hero and heroine, and the injured man had become an object of pity and contempt, who deserved all he got!

Every sort of compromise was suggested, but Squire Kayley was determined to teach a lesson once and for all to his native town, and he did it—an awful, searching, withering lesson that revealed to mothers, and fathers, and brothers the perilousness of the liberty which they accorded their young daughters and sisters; which revealed to the women the views of themselves as given in the talk of the men who formed their society; which revealed to the men their own unloveliness as seen by purer eyes and an unanswerable logic; an awful, withering lesson that was as if the whole town had been driven into the Palace of Truth, there to endure a day of terrible judgment.

Through it all Squire Kayley kept Nick away, travelling, as usual, for the firm that employed him, while Loftus met the public eye only when the dreadful engine of the law dragged him into view, showing him in all sorts of false and pitiful guises. The Squire was virtually ostracized, but he had the courage of his convictions and the spirit of the martyr, which every man should have who undertakes the work of reform.

At last it was over. Loftus had to sell most of

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

his possessions to pay costs and damages ; Letty hid herself in her mother's house, while Nick, travelling incessantly, did not hear the half that was said, and paid no heed whatever to the money that was now to his credit in the Greenville bank. The town subsided, having become "sadder and wiser," and Squire Kayley's reward, for he had declined all fees, was to see that when expeditions were organized, at least one mother went to look after the young people ; and that brothers and fathers took some heed as to who escorted their sisters and daughters ; further, the girls themselves were seen less often on the streets, and it became a great breach of social observance for any woman to pass the hotel.

All this soberness was gall and wormwood to Uncle Adam Dozier, who having, through the fall of Squire Kayley, regained the position he had lost because of his defeat by Sam, bloomed once more into the hotel-piazza orator of happier days, and from this altitude he made one declaration which raised a puzzling question for the people of Greenville.

"Josh Kayley is the most immoral man in this town," he declared, boldly ; "he is attempting to reduce everything to a money value, an' says thet even our mos' sacred affections kin be paid fur. It's wrong—it's damned wrong ; an' I say thet the man who kin spen' the money gained through the ruin of his wife is a poltroon an' a sneak ! But Josh Kayley ner no other man kin bring *us* to sich er pass—no, sir, I tell you the end is not

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

yet, an' you'll see I'm right — wait, an' you'll see!"

So Greenville, a little at a loss between the practical ills as exemplified by Uncle Adam, and the theoretical ills as exemplified by the Squire, waited.

In a convict-worked coal-mine two prisoners labored side by side, a negro and a white man. In the dim light cast on each by the other's lamp the negro showed a contented, rather cheerful face, and worked skilfully, while the white man, young and comely, was haggard and hopeless, and worked clumsily. The negro watched him furtively, but a guard stood near, for the white man was a new prisoner, and the negro did not speak. After a while sounds of laughter came from a group nearer the opening, and the guard moved on; then the negro said:

"Fur Gawd's sake! Marse Nick, whar's you come from?"

For the first time the white man looked at his companion. "Sam," he said, "you here?"

"Yassir, Marse Nick, I git yer kase o' dat money what Marse Josh got fumme f'um ole Marse Adam Dozier. Over to Duserville a gal fool me kase o' dat money, en her mammy had er funerl to per-wide, an' I come yer—yassir. An' you, Marse Nick—you got yo' money, too, sir?"

"Yes, I got my money, too, Sam," the young man answered, wielding his pick deliberately, "an' I gave it all to your Miss Letty; she never

SQUIRE KAYLEY'S CONCLUSIONS

had worked, an' I wasn't satisfied to think about her workin'."

"Yassir, Marse Nick, en den, sir?"

"An' then I heard 'bout the things your Marse Loftus had said 'bout her on the trial, an' so I killed him; for I thought the trial was 'tween me an' him, not her, an' while I was killin' him I told him why I did it; not 'cause he'd hurt me, but 'cause of what he'd said 'bout my wife on the trial. I told him so—I got him by himself, an' I told him; then I killed him—killed him slow, him, my old friend."

"An' Marse Josh!" the negro was breathless.

"I told the Squire that I'd tried my best to do his way, but no man could say the things Loftus had said about my wife on that trial an' live. I was sorry to disappoint the Squire, for he's right in the main, but my case was diff'runt."

"An' Marse Adam Dozier?"

"He said I was right, an' a gentleman, but I told him no, that the Squire was right, but my case was diff'runt."

WITHOUT THE COURTS

WITHOUT THE COURTS

It was a wide marsh, with a dim blue shore on the other side. Away down to the right the horizon was clear, for there was the sea into which the tide-water river emptied itself. To the left the river showed more definitely and in longer reaches, though still shored by the marsh. The low sand bluff that bounded the marsh on the south was fringed with saw-palmettoes and bunches of wild myrtle, with here and there a solemn pine rising to lonely heights, and here and there wide-spreading, moss-draped oaks making dense shadows.

Where the trees were thickest a plantation-house, built very much on the plan of the oaks, low and wide-spreading, stood looking out through its old-fashioned, small-paned windows, as it had looked for many, many changing years over the desolate marsh and sinuous river. So many had lived and loved, had come and gone, in that plain, heavily timbered old house, that at last it seemed almost to have acquired personality and the cheerful expression of a serene old age, which

WITHOUT THE COURTS

could look back on a simple, honorable, kindly past, and forward to a safe future. To-day its outlook was misty, for a fine white film was stretched across the sky that dimmed the sunshine a little, and blurred the outline of the far horizon. A mild, gray day, which, while demanding fires, yet permitted the master of the house to bring his book to the front piazza. His feet were on the banisters, his chair was tilted back, and a soft hat was drawn a little over his eyes. Some pipes and a box of tobacco were on another chair beside him, and at a little distance a red setter lay, with his head on his front paws, watching his master wistfully, with now and then a nervous start and a tremulous long breath that was almost a whimper. Out on the bluff, under the trees, a negro woman sat sewing, and a little child, with long fair curls creeping out from under the deep frill of her white sun-bonnet, played beside her.

It was very still—so still that as far away as she was the words of the child would now and then reach her father where he sat, and hearing, he would lift his head and look towards the little group. It was a dull-looking book that he held, bound in brown leather, and heavy; for when wheels were heard driving up to the side door, and he dropped it on the floor, it jarred loudly, so that the sound reached the child under the trees. She focussed her long bonnet on her father as he moved quickly down the piazza and cut across the corner to the side steps, where an

WITHOUT THE COURTS

open vehicle had stopped; then catching sight of the traveller who had arrived, she ran towards him as fast as her little legs could move, crying, "Tad! Tad!"

The two men shook hands; a servant, coming round from the back, took a valise from the wagon; and Tad going to meet the child, the master turned to the coachman.

"Did your mistress give you any orders last night?" he asked.

"Yes, suh," the negro answered; "Miss Lise say fuh me to come to de P'int fuh her dis mawn-in' des es soon es I bring Mass Tad from de station."

"Then go at once," and Mr. Beverley pulled out his watch.

"Yes, and be in a hurry." When once more he had reached his chair, Beverley pushed the heavy book aside with his foot, then, as if on second thought, he turned it up so that the title would show.

Before he took his seat he drew another big chair forward, then filling his pipe he lighted it slowly while he watched his friend, who, having returned the child to her nurse, was coming towards the house, stooping and patting the dog as he came. "Poor old doggie," he said, "who's been trampling on you? What ails him, George?" he went on, when he reached the piazza. "He's trembling as if he had a chill, and winces as if he were sore."

"I had to thrash him this morning," Beverley

WITHOUT THE COURTS

answered, and a gleam came into his eyes that seemed to stop the poor dog in his tracks, and he lay down as before, tremulous and watchful.

Tad's own eyes took on a watchful look. "Where's Lise?" he asked.

"Over at Aunt Bowman's."

Then, as sitting down Tad's foot struck the big book, he said, "Reading law, and beating old Dash, and writing me that extraordinary letter yesterday, something must be very wrong, George—by Jove! infernally wrong."

Beverley handed him the tobacco-box and pipes. "Light up," he said.

Tad obeyed, and for a little while they smoked in silence; then Tad, still with the watchful look in his eyes, went on:

"Your letter bothered me—bothered me because I could not come out yesterday."

"Yes," Beverley answered, "I meant you to come yesterday."

"I've wanted to come all winter," Tad went on, "but I've been away attending court, you know."

"Yes, I wish you had come," and Beverley blew out clouds of smoke. "That letter should have been written long ago. Well, I sent for you as my lawyer, Tad, and as you did not come yesterday, I reduced everything to writing."

"Reduced *what* to writing?"

"My instructions;" then Beverley turned his head away, and added, "I've decided to sell."

Tad's chair came down on its front legs with a

WITHOUT THE COURTS

bang ; his pipe, jarred from its stem, fell on the floor, and the dog sprang up with a nervous yelp.

Beverley nodded as if he had expected this outbreak, and taking his pipe from his lips he began to stir the tobacco in the bowl with his knife-blade, watching his own motions attentively. "I know all that you want to say," he went on, "but there's no use in saying it. I know that no creature has ever owned this land but Beverleys ; I know that I belong to the soil as that tree does ; I know that it would have broken my mother's heart, and my father's"—his voice shook a little. "Well, never mind ; if he knew, he would commend what I have done."

Tad was still leaning forward, with the pipe-stem forgotten between his fingers, gazing at the pipe-bowl forgotten on the floor. Beverley was looking out across the marsh.

"That club has offered me a fancy price," he continued, his voice growing more and more monotonous, as if he had rehearsed his speech, "and I mean to take it. They want this house just as it stands, the high lands, and the fields down to the barn ; in short, all of the original Beverley tract, which will give them the best shooting and fishing. I want you to begin at once to look up the deeds, and to get everything in readiness ; but I do not want the bargain concluded, nor the transfer made, until next autumn, and I shall put everything into your hands, as I do not wish to enter into any of the details. I

WITHOUT THE COURTS

shall keep all the up-river tract and continue to plant it, living in the overseer's house—"

"And Lise and the child?" Tad interrupted; and now he raised his eyes from the fallen pipe and fixed them on his friend's averted face.

"They will go to Europe—and live there." There was a moment's pause, then Beverley went on: "The money I get for this place, together with what I make planting, will enable me to keep them there—the child always under the supervision of a careful English governess, to whom I myself will give instructions, for I shall take them over. In case of my death, there is yourself, and my life insurance made out to the child—"

Tad grasped his arm. "George!"—and he shook him as if to waken him—"George, for God's sake, tell me all!"

"I am telling you all."

"But Lise has learned to love the place!"

"Yes, she has learned to love the place."

"And your aunt Bowman, and Jack, and Sandy, like your own brothers! George, you'll pull up the growth of generations!"

There was no answer, and the look across the marsh became more set.

"George!"—again shaking his arm—"George, for God's sake, tell me all!"

"I *am* telling you all. Aunt Bowman? Yes, it will hurt her; this was her father's house—"

"And Sandy!" Tad struck in, leaning a little more forward, trying to get a better view of his friend's face.

WITHOUT THE COURTS

Beverley glanced round at the dog. "Get away from here!" he cried, springing to his feet, his eyes flashing. The dog fled down the steps, and the men's eyes met.

"I *am* telling you all!" Beverley repeated, harshly. "And it will be better for the child." He sat down again, while a deathly, spent look came over his face, and the dog once more crept up the steps.

"Better—best," he went on, as if to himself. "*Best*—yes. And as I have no son—thank God!—no son, what does it matter? Traditions? memories? all marred and blotted—*stained*. And the place must not be called Beverley any more; the name must vanish. You hear, Tad?" lifting his head quickly. "You must stipulate about the name."

Tad put down the pipe-stem at last, put it into the tobacco-box with an exaggerated carefulness as if it were spun glass, and began to walk up and down the piazza. After a turn or two he saw Beverley bend his head to one side as if listening.

"You think you hear the carriage," he said. "I wish Lise *would* come; I don't think she should stay away when you are so worried."

"It was my arrangement," Beverley answered, coldly; "and I do not need a keeper, Tad."

There was silence while Tad walked the length of the piazza and back, then he paused behind Beverley's chair. "George," he said, "I love you as I love myself, but as surely as my name is

WITHOUT THE COURTS

Thaddeus Marvin, I'll throw up your business, and even your friendship, before I'll help you to do this thing."

Beverley shook his head slowly. "No," he said—"no you won't," and again silence fell between them.

Somewhere within the house a clock ticked; a bird fluttered down to a rose-bush in front, and the laughter of the little child came clear and sweet from the river bank. Presently the dog lifted its head sidewise and grew rigid; and Beverley, putting his pipe slowly into the tobacco-box, laid his two hands on the arms of his chair. Tad looked quickly from one to the other. The dog heard something that the master expected to hear! Then coming nearer on the still air was the thud of a horse's hoofs, and a mad rattle of wheels. The dog rushed out, barking wildly; the negro woman gathered the child up into her arms; Tad ran to the side steps, and Beverley rose slowly to his feet.

On the horse came; but now Tad could see that the driver was urging him, and that the lady on the back seat was leaning forward urging the driver. What was she fleeing from! It was scarcely a moment before they reached the steps, and Tad sprang forward.

"What is it, Lise?" he cried, and almost lifted her from the wagon.

Her forget-me-not-blue eyes looked as if they had seen some dreadful vision, which they would forever see; her fair hair, blown out here and

WITHOUT THE COURTS

there by the wind, crisped and curled about a pallid face; her colorless lips were drawn back squarely, as in a mask of tragedy, and her breath seemed hard to get.

"What is it?" Tad repeated.

She clutched his shoulder. "Sandy," she whispered—"brought home dead!" She drew a long, sobbing breath—"shot!"

In Tad's honest eyes that looked into hers there dawned a growing horror of knowledge: and slowly, as if directed by some stronger power, he loosened her hand from off his shoulder and laid it on the railing of the steps.

"Call the carriage back," Beverley said, looking down on them from above, "I must be needed at the Point."

A rigidity crept over the trembling woman; she drew her lips together, catching the lower one with her teeth, and began to mount the steps as a blind person might. At the top, her husband stood aside, out of her way; their eyes met—it was not long—then she passed on slowly into the house.

It was very still at the Point when they arrived. Mrs. Bowman sent at once for her nephew to come to her where she had shut herself into her room, while Tad took his seat on the front piazza with others who were waiting about, and watching, and talking in hushed voices.

"It is so dreadful!" said the distant cousin, who took her seat next to Tad. "Sandy was so handsome! and his mother's darling—me! me!

WITHOUT THE COURTS

it is always the dearest who is taken," wiping her eyes. "And last night he was the gayest of the gay—he and Lise Beverley. George went home early, just as soon as they began to dance. He is so quiet, you know, so deadly still. I always feel a little bit sorry for Lise; poor, pretty, gay Lise. But George left her here last night, and she was in a gale of spirits, she and Sandy, dancing like mad, and keeping us in roars of laughter. Cousin Bowman was so pleased to see the young ones so gay, and to think!—oh, me! to think!"—and again she wiped away her tears. "Have you heard the particulars?" she went on, turning squarely on her silent companion.

Tad shook his head. "Only the bare fact," he answered.

"How strange!" Then she began eagerly: "Sandy went out very early this morning to shoot—he often does, you know—and told the boatmen to meet him at nine o'clock at the long bend below the far swamp—you know it?"

"Yes," Tad answered.

"And they found him lying there dead! Accident, of course, for both barrels of his gun were empty, and just by the trunk of a fallen tree; he must have tripped in stepping over it, don't you think so?"

"Yes," Tad answered again.

"They brought him home; we were all late at breakfast, laughing and talking, and those stupid negroes brought him to the front landing! Lise saw the boat coming. 'There's Sandy!' she said,

WITHOUT THE COURTS

and ran out. Oh, it was awful! Cousin Bowman and Jack were nearly frantic!" This time she sobbed a little, and others near wiped their eyes.

"Jack has gone out to walk by himself, poor fellow," she went on, recovering herself, "and I'm so glad George has come over; he'll be a comfort to Cousin Bowman. He and Sandy have always been so devoted; he's like another son to Cousin Bowman; she depends on him greatly, as the head of her family. Poor George! he adored Sandy."

"Yes," Tad answered, "he did. He did most of Sandy's work at school, and took many of Sandy's whippings."

"Poor George!" she repeated, "it will break his heart. And Lise—Lise stood there like a dead woman while they brought him, lying on an old door, straight up to her—past her! Oh, it was awful!"

Tad rose hurriedly, "Take this chair," he said, and gave his place to a new-comer. After this he kept himself as far from his late companion and as near to the hall door as was possible, and waited patiently through all the long, lagging hours, while people came to make inquiries and to offer help; and food was served in the dining-room and eaten between whispered sentences that told the story of the unfortunate accident over and over again, and so sent it away through all the country-side, and into the town newspapers.

WITHOUT THE COURTS

At last, as evening fell, Jack Bowman came in at the back door, and down the hall. Beverley came out quickly from his aunt's room, and Tad stepped in from the piazza. The three men paused a moment, then Bowman led the way into the parlor where, on a couch in the middle of the room, the dead man lay. He shut the door and turned to Beverley. "It was buckshot," he said.

Beverley nodded. "For our good names' sake there could be no scandal," he answered.

Bowman bent his head.

"He agreed in this," Beverley went on, "and arranged it all himself so that no living soul, and especially his mother, need ever know."

Again Bowman bent his head.

"And at the last"—Beverley's voice broke a little—"at the last he fired both barrels into the air."

Bowman laid his hand on the folded hands of his brother, and Beverley turned towards the door with shudders as of mortal agony going over him.

Tad took the reins himself, leaving the coachman to walk, and he and his friend drove through the lonely night together. Through all the distance Beverley sat silent, bent over like an old, decrepit man, but as they turned in at the big gate, he laid his hand on Tad's arm.

"You must take the old dog with you," he said, "out of my sight! This morning I had to beat him to make him come away, and at the last he ran back and licked his face."

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

I

“ And judge none lost ; but wait and see,
With hopeful pity, not disdain ;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain ;
And love and glory, that may raise
This soul to God in after days.”

“ 'REELY! oh, 'Reely Fleish ! stop a minute !” called a young woman, who in a flying wrapper was running down what was in courtesy a “ garden-walk,” “ I want to ask you somethin’;” and the young woman she called turned and came back across the vacant piece of prairie that crept like a bay into the town of Pecan. For the prairie would assert itself, and wherever there was a vacant place the cactus and mesquite and huisachie sprang up. Mrs. Binkin’s house fronted on this great bay of prairie that a few hundred yards away ended in an abrupt bluff ; below this there was the river, and a stretch of lowlands that spread as far as the eye could see ; so that, looking from Mrs. Binkin’s house, the gnarled

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

live-oak-trees that edged the bluff were cut clear against the sky—a strange, weird outlook that very few, save Mrs. Binkin, cared for. Meanwhile, Miss Anna-Bell Binkin, Mrs. Binkin's daughter, lifted the old bucket-hoop that held the gate shut, and, letting Miss Aurelia Fleish come in, began at once to speak on the subject which at that moment lay nearest her heart.

"Is it true that 'Mandy Brown's frien' has come down from Jonesborough?" she asked.

"Law, yes," and Miss Fleish tossed her head. "Mary-Lou Johnson's her name," she went on. "I seen her an' 'Mandy this mornin', and she looked mighty airy; I had to laugh!"

"You don't say;" and Miss Anna-Bell gathered up her flowing gown to mount the steps.

A small porch, then a narrow hall, guiltless of furniture save for an old hat-stand, upon which hung a long, black sun-bonnet and an old piece of rope which at night made the front door fast. A place with but one redeeming feature, the picture framed in the wide-open back door. In the foreground a trim kitchen-garden, where in the borders a few roses bloomed royally; farther off, a strip of luxuriant clover with the cows knee-deep in it, and beyond, the prairie, that was now a great sweep of sun-bathed blossoms—a limitless expanse all brown and orange and crimson with the velvety-soft coreopsis, and gleaming here and there with the gold of the dwarf sunflower. A brilliant picture that redeemed the shabby hall, if Miss Anna-Bell had only known how to see it;

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

but she closed the door with a bang, for the Misses Binkin ignored even to themselves the garden and the cows, from which they drew most of their income. The front, with its rough grass and few weary cedar-trees, suited them much better ; it had a careless air of leisure and wealthy indifference about it that they liked, the thrift of the back premises being more in accord with their mother's old-fashioned taste.

Passing through the hall, Miss Fleish was ushered into a room made excessively hot by a fire which burned in an open fireplace, serving to heat a row of irons ; but, unlike the hall, this room was crowded with curiously mixed furniture. A huge wardrobe, black with age, and finished with brass, seemed to support the ceiling, while the bedstead, of rough, unpainted pine, was evidently home-made ; a butter-churn stood on one side of the fireplace, while on the other side stood a great blue-and-white India-china jar, filled with chips. A shining new sewing-machine, a painted pine basin-stand and dressing-table were common enough, but the few heavily carved chairs compensated for all. This old furniture, despised by the young women, was put as far from the gaudy parlor as Mrs. Binkin, who knew its value and the proof it was of a social past, would permit. Her daughters condemned it, at least the elder ones did, for there was a little one born after the lapse of many years, and just after the death of its drunken father, who was quite different. This child seemed to step back to the

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

older generation, seemed to suit and belong to the old furniture, and evening after evening, when the elder sisters were out, this child, wrapped close in her mother's arms, listened eagerly to the stories of the time before the old people had been driven to Texas by the war that had desolated the far-away homestead. Mrs. Binkin had succumbed to her surroundings too entirely ever to retrieve herself, but after her husband's death she had taken a new hold on life, and had determined that this child should be different from her elder daughters, who were like their father, and of whom she had long ago lost all control.

Now the little girl sat on the floor behind the china jar, following with her finger the strange raised pattern, far away in a world of her own, while Mrs. Binkin, standing over an ironing-board, was finishing the week's washing for the school-master. An awful thing to Anna-Bell and Lily-Maud was this washing, but it paid for little Mary's schooling, and Mrs. Binkin now heeded little beyond Mary. As the girls came in, Mrs. Binkin, without turning from her work, greeted the new-comer, while Anna-Bell, pushing forward a chair for Miss Fleish, returned to the sewing-machine, where something of a gorgeous plaid pattern was in process of making. Miss Fleish took her seat with a flourish, then, in a clear peacock voice, that rose easily above the whir of the machine, continued the conversation she had begun outside.

"Mary-Lou Johnson, that's her name," she be-

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

gan, "and she's rich, and dresses tip-top, you bet," nodding her head. "She thinks lots of herself, too, and Mandy Brown thinks she's done great things havin' a girl away from Jonesborough to stay with her."

"Law, yes, she's been talkin' about it enough," and Anna-Bell stopped the machine with a sharp click and looked over her shoulder as she asked: "Who's goin' with Milly Conway to Mis' Gollyhaw's this evenin'?" Even Mrs. Binkin paused and turned at this question, and 'Reely's eyes grew sharper, and her lips thinner, as she answered, "I hear she's goin' with the school-master, but my brother Billy says that if she does go with Mr. Forbes there'll be somebody missin' by to-morrow."

"Billy Fleish said that, did he, 'Reely?" and Mrs. Binkin turned on the visitor. "I wish Tom Conway had heard him." Then, with a sudden change of tone, "But it's time this feud between the Conways and the Fleishes should stop, and your father ought to stop it."

"Who cares," 'Reely sneered, in return; "just so long as your Conways, 'dandy Tom' and all, go under, the Fleishes will be satisfied; but it beats me what the men see in Milly Conway, anyhow."

"They know what they see," Mrs. Binkin retorted, "but I don't understand what right Billy Fleish has to shoot Mr. Forbes because Milly likes him. A girl has a right to choose if she has the chance, and Mr. Forbes is a gentleman, and has taught Milly heaps; and," with a softer tone coming into

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

her voice, "Milly's the sweetest girl in Pecan, and the kindest."

"And my brother Billy ain't good enough, I suppose," 'Reely sneered, angrily; "I'll let you know, Mis' Binkin, that Billy B. Fleish, junior, can buy out all the Forbeses and Conways in this country."

"All but Milly," and Mrs. Binkin returned to her ironing as the door opened to admit her second daughter, a smaller edition of Anna-Bell.

"Howdy, 'Reely," in a slow and nasal voice; "and what's Mar off on?"

"Milly Conway," Anna-Bell answered, and turning once more to the machine, she went on. "Don't mind Mar, 'Reely, she's been off her head about two things ever since I can remember—Milly Conway and little Mary."

"Drop it, drop it," Lily-Maud said, languidly; "that's worn out."

'Reely tossed her head. "I don't give a cent," she said, "'bout Milly, nor Billy, nor Forbes, but Par says shootin's too good for any Fleish that'd run after a Conway."

"And death would be a heap sweeter to Milly," Mrs. Binkin retorted, "than to marry Billy Fleish, if he owned the whole of Texas." Then she added, slowly, "There's other things besides money, 'Reely Fleish."

"Drop it, drop it," Lily-Maud repeated, and Mrs. Binkin leaving the room, followed by little Mary, the young women had the conversation their own way.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

It took only a moment for Mrs. Binkin' to put on the old sun-bonnet from the hat-stand, and with little Mary trotting beside her to make her way down through the garden and pasture to the bars at the back of the lot. From this she followed a foot-path through the breadth of flowers that brushed softly against her limp black calico, and struck into a narrow lane between wire fences where the deep black ruts, now dry and dusty, showed the depth to which the mud could go. On one side there was a narrow track zigzagging in and out to avoid the thorny bunches of huisachie and mesquite—a track made by the cows, and used thankfully by the people. A long, dreary lane, with the remains of an orchard on one side and an old field on the other—a desperate bog in winter, and in summer a furnace heated seven times.

Swiftly Mrs. Binkin walked, a tall, straight figure blackly defined in the glare of the sunlight, her dark eyes gleaming, and her black hair, always untidy, blowing across her strongly cut, sun-browned face. It was a tired, hardened face to all save little Mary, or to Milly Conway whose presence brought back to the middle-aged woman the love of her life. Few knew the old story, or the blackness of the tragedy, but Mrs. Binkin's contemporaries remembered that when she was Milly Withers, the belle of the settlement, and supposed to be on the verge of marrying Jim Conway, Milly's father, she had astonished the town by disappearing with Fleish, a man whom

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

she had refused, and whom she openly despised. But Fleish, coming back in a short time, said that he had carried her off for his friend Joe Binkin, who was then living on a far-away ranch. The girl being an orphan living with an old grandmother, who had nothing whatever to do with her neighbors, and who buried this, that seemed a disgrace, in silence, the transaction remained a mystery, but at the same time became the starting-point of the feud between the Fleishes and the Conways. It was years before Joe Binkin brought his wife back to take possession of the old grandmother's house, and then old friends, staring and wondering, found it hard to recognize, in the battered, rough woman, the pretty Milly Withers who had disappeared so strangely.

Few knew more than the eye could see, and thus many wondered because of Mrs. Binkin's devotion to Milly Conway, and because of the girl's name. Why was it that Jim Conway named his only daughter after the woman who had jilted him so openly, so outrageously? Son after son had been born to him, and he seemed to have no care for them, but at the last the mother died in giving birth to the one little daughter, and the reckless, drink-sodden man seemed to come to himself. A man notorious for his daring hardness and roughness took the little creature into his arms and keeping as gently as any woman could have done it, and as deftly. He paid no heed to the wife lying dead, but he looked down at the daughter she had given him as if he had found

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

his life once more. And when after the funeral the clergyman said that he would baptize the child, Mr. Conway held her himself until the time, then putting her into the clergyman's arms, scandalized the town by naming her "Milly Withers." And the dark, hardened woman standing in the background felt the blush of her youth burning in her face. What she had suffered as Milly Withers, what she still suffered as Joe Binkin's wife, no words could tell, but in spite of all she did not justify herself to Jim Conway until her husband was dead, and Jim himself lay dying. Then she went and took her place beside her old lover. "And I have kept silent," she said, while she held his almost nerveless hand against her faded cheek, "that this hand might not be stained with blood because of me." And the dying man cried aloud a curse on Fleish, the true defrauder of his life—an awful curse that the woman waited still to see fulfilled.

And now, as she hurried on her way, she revolved in her mind all the possibilities of the case. Milly could not stay away from Mrs. Gollyhaw's, because that would look as if she was afraid of Billy; she must go, but she must go with Tom, and Mrs. Binkin must try to see Tom and tell him what Billy had said. It might mean death to somebody, but better to Billy Fleish than to Mr. Forbes, for whom she was convinced Milly had a more than common fancy. Her eyes glittered as she thought how Milly could be hurt by Fleish in such an event. "I'd kill him myself first," she muttered.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

The end of the lane was reached at last, crossed by the Conway fence—a board fence, unpainted and gray with lichens; a straight walk, bordered with purple flags that were blooming profusely; then a long, low house, overgrown with vines, and falling in at one end. A broad piazza ran the length of the house, giving shelter to sets of harness, to saddles, to barrels, and chairs, and a pile of corn on the cob. One great live-oak shaded the whole front of the house, while at the back there were pecan-trees so tall that they marked the place for miles across the prairie. Mrs Binkin paused at the gate, for a horse with blankets strapped to the saddle was tied there as if ready for a journey. She looked at the horse for a moment. “Billy Fleish’s horse,” she said.

“And he’s coming out of the house,” Mary said, from where she stood near the half-hung gate. Mrs. Binkin started a little, and turned from her contemplation of the horse to meet the man who was approaching. He was squarely built, with a round, rough face, rather more flushed than was natural, and his air as he kicked the gate open was decidedly disagreeable.

“Does the looks of that horse satisfy you, Mis’ Binkin?” he asked.

“As well as anything of yours could satisfy me, Billy Fleish,” she answered, promptly.

He looked at her a moment viciously. “It seems to me,” he said, at last, “that Milly Conway’s been learnin’ to talk from you.”

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

Mrs. Binkin laughed. "Milly needs no teachin', Billy Fleish, to talk to you."

Billy's face turned nearly purple as he jumped on his horse. "If you were a man, Mis' Binkin," he said, "your life would 'a' been leakin' out by now."

The woman stopped suddenly in her going, and stepped back to his horse's side. "My life don't make any difference, Billy," she said, with a warning look in her eyes that yet was pleading, "and if my life will stand for any other life, take it and welcome."

The flush died out of the man's face, and he jerked his horse back on his haunches. "You're plum' crazy," he said, hurriedly; "I'm goin' to the ranch!" Then he was gone, galloping down the long, dreary lane.

The inside of the Conway house corresponded very fairly with the outside; there was a mixture of plenty and want, of comfort and decay, that told its own story of money that came easily and went heedlessly. On either side of the hall there were two rooms, large and shadowy; the floors were bare, and though tracked from end to end with the ubiquitous Texas mud, they showed signs of honest scouring. Guns stood in all the corners; bridles, lariats, powder-flasks and shot-bags, cartridge-belts and whips seemed to hang on every nail and peg. One room had beds in it, the other was chiefly occupied by a pine table now laid for supper. A fire burned in the broad fireplace, and a negress was moving about evidently pre-

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

paring the evening meal. A bucket on a shelf—a corner cupboard—a safe, and some splint-bottomed chairs completed the furniture of the room, except, of course, the various pots and pans that adorned the mantel-piece and hung about the fireplace.

This room was known as the kitchen, the one opposite as "the boys' room." It was a standing scandal in Pecan, that though the Conway men rode the finest horses, and had the most expensive fire-arms, that though Milly "put out" all her sewing, went to school with the richest girls in the town, had a woman to cook and wash and a man for the horses and cows, yet there was no cooking-stove in the house, no parlor, not a stick of decent furniture nor a square of carpet. Further, Milly had to sleep in the loft because her brothers had let one end of the house fall down. And the Conways listened and laughed at the pretensions of Pecan and stuck to their kitchen.

The loft about which they pitied Milly was the place she loved best. It was the size of the house, and the wide dormer-windows looking through the live-oak in front, and over the town, and through the great pecans in the back, and over the winding river and sun-lightened prairie, were the prettiest windows in the country. There were many skins on the floor, given her by her brothers, who were "mighty hunters," and every trip to town or city had brought back something for Milly, who, like a little queen in this despised loft, treasured all these brothers had to give.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

Her horse and saddle were the best in the country, and she had been taught to shoot like a boy. And here again much talk was caused by Milly's mode of life and training. However, most people were fond of Milly, and the young men tried hard to win the liking of her brothers, no one but Billy Fleish daring to visit her against the wishes of her four guardians; and dark things were prophesied if Tom Conway ever "got a chance at Billy." Only prophesied as yet, for Pecan had at last reached that point of slavery where some good reason had to be given before one man was allowed to shoot another. So Tom Conway had to wait for a good reason for killing Billy Fleish, or run the risk of hanging, and the town waited and watched for results with some impatience.

Thus matters stood when Paul Forbes made his appearance on the scene. He was handsome, he was young, he was well mannered; he was different from any man that Milly had ever known. He came to Pecan as school-master, and Milly was his brightest scholar. He made friends of her brothers, and coming to the house he found on a corner shelf a few books left by the father, and it was here that he made his most decided success. These books were the only sign left of James Conway's early estate, but they were proof positive of money and education and that once he had been a gentleman, for there were remnants of fine editions among these books. To Milly her father had shown only love and kindness; he used to read to her, he had helped her

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

with her lessons, and had talked to her of his early home, and of the usages and customs of the world to which he had once belonged. It was this training that made Milly a little different from her neighbors, but this difference did not grow into discontent until she met Paul Forbes. Up to that time she had been satisfied by the little height she had already attained. She had been distinguished by the devotion of her father and brothers, by the dignified attentions of the Episcopal missionary who came once a month to Pecan, and by being the one person whom Mrs. Binkin regarded as being worth talking to. For though Mrs. Binkin was poor, very poor, yet the town knew quite well that she was the cleverest woman in Pecan. All these little triumphs had satisfied Milly until she met Paul Forbes and heard him talk of her father's books. This exaltation of the father pleased the children, and they recognized in a dim way something in this man that stirred in their own blood, but which had been left out in their training. A sense of having been defrauded of their birthright came to them, and with it a discontent that was not wholesome. Mrs. Binkin was also won by the new-comer, and corroborated all the surmises of the Conways as to their father, but she watched Paul Forbes the more that he grew into a favorite, into a realized ideal.

Very soon the gossips had assigned Mr. Forbes to Milly, and as soon as this fact seemed to be established, the young men who had been her

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

admirers yielded him the field of her favor. All, that is, except Billy Fleish, who said that "Milly Conway couldn't drop him for no city fool!" But he said this very carefully, for he remembered always that his special enemy, Tom Conway, backed by his three brothers, was watching him, and longing for some indiscretion on his part. In addition to this Billy remembered that his own people were all against him, for they declared that they could not forgive a Fleish for forgetting the feud and stooping to care for a Conway. In her turn Milly was greatly troubled. Too well she knew what it was she dreaded, for she had seen her eldest brother brought home dead, and her father die, from wounds received in this feud. On this account she had been kinder to Billy than was wise, perhaps, hoping by this means to make him see the uselessness of his suit. Forbes, on the other hand, ignored the situation; he found the Conways and Mrs. Binkin to be the most companionable people in a town that was only endurable as affording him a support while he read law.

So things stood when Mrs. Gollyhaw's candy-stew, as Pecan called it, filled the town with excited expectation. By a clever distribution of hints; by a lamentation over her poverty and inability to do more; by a mysterious humility and self-abasement, and by loud declarations on the subject of other people's successful parties, Mrs. Gollyhaw had made her party the town's talk. Chinese lanterns, a new sensation in Pecan,

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

and a wild excess of extravagance that the town could scarcely understand, were to figure at this entertainment. Besides, there were whispers of something else that was in preparation, something else that Pecan hoped was a supper, although a supper in addition to a "candy-stew" was an unheard-of luxury. Yet in spite of all this preparation the Gollyhaws persisted in speaking of the party in a deprecating way as a "little entytainment, nothin' much, jest a little fun for the boys an' girls."

And as the interest in this party culminated, Billy Fleish determined that he must take Milly Conway to this crowning festivity. Forbes and her brothers had escorted her to the other entertainments of the season; it was now manifestly his right to take her to the Gollyhaws'. A week before this evening of which we write, Billy had asked Milly if she would go with him to the Gollyhaws'; and she, being determined not to accept him as her escort, and yet afraid to refuse because of the feud that was held in check only so long as Billy had hope of her favor, had laughed in a merry, provoking way. Billy flushed a little as she laughed, and his eyes glittered dangerously.

"Will you go or not?" he repeated.

Then her brown eyes flashed the anger back into his, and her face flushed and she longed to defy him; but that would bring danger to lives far dearer than her own, so she turned away, answering quietly, "If I go, Billy, I'll go with Tom."

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

There was a moment's pause, then Billy left her, and her heart was light that once more the trouble had been tided over. And she gave Paul Forbes the same answer when the next day he asked her the same question, but her voice had a different tone in it, and her eyes betrayed that she was sorry. Beautiful eyes, Forbes thought them, like clear water running over fallen leaves. He had seen this effect often in mountain streams, when the autumn leaves, caught in the rocks and roots, made a brown bed for the sparkling water. Beautiful eyes, and her voice was like the sound of water, too; not the ripple and gurgle of the stream as it splashed over the stones, but like the deep undertone that the attentive listener hears.

She was surely a remarkable girl, all things considered; and now on the afternoon of Mrs. Gollyhaw's candy-stew, her affairs had made a great stride. Once more Billy had been to see her, and the interview had been stormy; and when Mrs. Binkin, full of anxiety raised by 'Reely Fleish's words, made her way to the Conways', Milly was truly glad to see her. The quieter brothers were off on a "drive," and Milly knew that Tom was too quick-tempered to be told what Billy had said that afternoon, so Mrs. Binkin coming in just then seemed specially sent; and when, after hearing from Judy, the cook, that the girl was in the loft, she called up, the answer came quickly and cheerily from above, and a trap-door that shut the lower world from Milly's

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

domain was lifted. As Mrs. Binkin emerged from the lower story, two little brown hands were stretched out in welcome, little Mary was greeted with a rush and deposited in a hammock that hung in a corner, and the most comfortable chair was pulled forward for Mrs. Binkin.

"You are just in time to hear about Billy," Milly began, as she knelt on the floor in front of Mrs. Binkin. "He asked me the other day to go to Mrs. Gollyhaw's with him, and I told him that I was going with Tom, and I told Mr. Forbes the same thing," a faint flush coming on her cheek; "but this evening Billy came again, and said that he would go to the ranch if I did not go with him, and I said again that I was going with Tom; you would not believe how angry he got," pushing the waving hair back from her forehead. "Then he said, 'Will you marry me or not, Milly Conway, or will you marry that damned Forbes?' and he spoke so loud that Judy came and stood in the doorway. He did not see her, but when she said, 'Marse Tom's in the back yard,' you should have seen Billy jump! It was not true," the girl added, simply, "and I was not so much afraid as that, but it frightened Billy, and he said, 'Tell her to go away, Milly; you know I won't hurt you.' So Judy went; but she didn't go far. Then Billy said again, 'Will you marry me?'"

"Didn't you knock him, Milly?" cried little Mary, looking over the side of the hammock.

Milly laughed. "Of course not," she said, "but he looked as if I had when I said 'No.' You

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

should have seen him, Mrs. Binkin—oh, he looked dreadful as he jumped up; then he said, 'Then you shall *never* marry, Milly Conway!' and went away."

Mrs. Binkin sat silent. Things had gone much further than she had thought, and she was not quite sure what her best course would be. She had never intended to tell Milly of Billy's threat, revealed by his sister 'Reely, but now she felt more than ever that Tom must be warned. "Billy Fleish is a coward," she said, slowly, "and he means some kind of secret mischief."

"I'm afraid to tell Tom," Milly said, anxiously, "and the other boys won't be home for a week or more."

Mrs. Binkin shook her head. "Tom's dangerous," she said, "and Billy told me at the gate that he was going to the ranch right now."

"Do you believe him?"

In her heart Mrs. Binkin was doubtful, but it was better that Milly should believe it, and, taking up her old sun-bonnet, she answered, slowly, "He had his blankets with him; all the same, I'm glad that you're going with Tom; but what are you going to wear?"

"Anything—anything's good enough for the Gollyhaws." Then the girl smoothed the straggling black hair back from Mrs. Binkin's forehead. "I wish you and Mary could come and live with me," she said.

The elder woman's face softened, her fierce eyes grew wistful, and a faint flush came on her sunken cheeks. "You'll not be here long," she answered.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

"You'll be marrying Mr. Forbes," little Mary suggested.

Milly shook her head, and the clear brown eyes had a troubled look in them. "I'll never marry," she said. "I'll never marry; I'll live here always with the boys."

There was a little falling cadence in her voice, and instantly there flashed into Mrs. Binkin's heart a sudden suspicion against Forbes, and with it a swift, fierce anger. Was he playing with this fair life? Was he daring to do such a thing? And she went away hastily down the rough ladder, not trusting herself to speak further with the girl; but at the gate she paused. "I'll go to the Gollyhaws' myself, Milly," she called back, "Mary and I."

Yes, she would put aside the habits of years and go to the party; it would be her only chance to see Tom Conway, and, besides, Milly might need her. But now, in her sudden suspicion of Forbes, she felt almost tempted not to rouse Tom Conway, but to let things take their course, for perhaps it was Forbes's life that Billy threatened. Perhaps—but as Milly had positively refused Billy, all barriers against the renewal of the feud were now removed; indeed, a further cause for anger had been added, and she felt that Tom's life was in danger. What would be best? What course would be safest for the Conways?

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

II

"Look in my face ; my name is Might-have-been ;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell ;
Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea shell,
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between."

The Gollyhaws' house seemed transformed ; its own mistress could scarcely recognize it. Its best parlor, with its gorgeous carpet, its chromos, its overflowing lambrequins, its staring lamp that went by machinery, its china vases and photograph albums, was thrown open. The "sittin' room," with its rattling old piano, bed, wardrobe, and the odds and ends of furniture—a great fall from the parlor—was also thrown open. Beyond this was the best bedroom, where the glory was resumed, and there were more lambrequins and tidies and china vases. The broad back piazza was lighted with a few of the much-talked-of lanterns, and was empty save for two chairs placed mysteriously in the shadow. In the back yard, under some trees, there were more Chinese lanterns, and tables amply provided with empty plates and dishes and pans of flour for the candy-pulling. All was opened to the public—all except the dining-room ; that seemed to have vanished. In the midst of all this glory, Mrs. Gollyhaw, in a rattling black silk, that was painfully shiny, stood brimming over with delight.

"This entytainment 'll show this town w'at's w'at," she soliloquized, as she sat down for a moment in the best chair of the best parlor and

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

looked about her ; but only for a moment. Then she rose and went through an open door to where the lanterns made a mystery of the back piazza, and from this she passed on to where a closed door with an unlighted lantern above it revealed the missing dining-room. She paused a moment, drawing a long breath, then turning the latch softly, stepped in on her toes, as if afraid of the unwonted grandeur she knew was within. She closed the door carefully before she looked ; then, with clasped hands, turned to view the picture spread before her. A long, narrow, high table, made longer by other tables of different heights, filled the room. There were lamps—glass lamps with red flannels in the bowls—at equal distances up and down the table. In the centre there was a wooden stand, all covered and wrapped in fringed tissue-paper, blue and pink and purple, and on this stand were teacups full of custard. All up and down the table were stone-china plates turned down, and on each plate there was one apple, one orange, and one banana. Inside this phalanx, drawn up in rows, were pies in tin plates, cakes, and little piles of candies, nuts, and raisins. Mrs. Gollyhaw's heart was full—there never had been such a table spread in Pecan ! It is true the room was barren, the floor was bare, the thinly plastered walls which showed the laths like ribs were not even whitewashed ; the low wooden ceiling, darkened by the smoke and flies of many years, was unpainted ; the great fireplace, with its two small

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

pieces of railroad iron for andirons, was full of ashes ; the mantel-shelf was of rough boards ; the back door into the kitchen was battened, with an iron hook and staple for fastening, and the low windows on each side of the room curtainless.

All this was unlovely, but passed unnoticed, because it was the custom in Pecan. Dining-rooms were only places to eat in ; they required only tables and chairs and a safe ; they must be near the kitchen—for the rest, people could look on the table, and to the satisfaction of the inner man. And now Mrs. Gollyhaw looked on the table only, and her glory was complete. Truly Pecan had never seen such a “dressed table.”

“There’s ten lemon-pies,” she murmured, keeping tally on her stumpy fingers, “an’ ten apple-pies, an’ twenty merlasses-pies—enough pies, I think,” and she paused to push a plate of cake to a more suitable spot ; “an’ six dozen oranges,” she resumed, “an’ six dozen apples, an’ fo’ dozen bernannys—enough fruit, in all conscience ; then two dollars’ worth of candy an’ the same of ree-sins, and pecans no end ; an’ fifty cents’ worth of cheese, and five dozen cups of custard, an’ cakes for a army !” She stood still and clasped her hands, while a dreamy look came over her face. “Yes, Gollyhaw’s right,” she said, under her breath, “this party ’ll cost good twenty dollars outside Lorena-Dora’s dress, for the music-man from Prairieville will cost two dollars.” Just here there came a rattling at the kitchen door that caused the hook to jump in the staple.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

"All right!" Mrs. Gollyhaw called, and made her way as fast as she was able to that end of the room; quickly she lifted the hook, and the door falling back, as if its hinges were weak, a great negro woman came in sideways. She was draggled and dirty, her wool, twisted into innumerable small queues wrapped with white cord, stood off from her head at every angle, her sleeves were rolled up to her shoulders, and in each hand she carried a painted pine bucket.

"The lemmynade," she said, briefly, pausing and facing Mrs. Gollyhaw.

"Sure-er-nough!" Mrs. Gollyhaw said, as if overwhelmed with pleased surprise; and taking the tin dipper that reposed in one of the buckets she tasted the fluid critically, smacking her lips. "That's good, Jinny," she went on, putting back the dipper, and wiping her lips with her forefinger and thumb, "an set 'em on the shelf at the end of the gall'ry. Is Uncle Green come?"

"Not yit," and Jinny preceded her mistress from the room; "but thet new nigger from Prairieville's in the kitchen."

Mrs. Gollyhaw bridled a little and smiled a sinister smile; for this "new nigger," as Jinny called him, was a fifer, who had come to aid in the festivities. "Uncle Green," the local fiddler, had lived in Pecan from time immemorial, and as far back as any one could remember he had played at every dance within a radius of forty miles—that is, until a "revival" had banished dancing. For there were religious as well as

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

social feuds in Pecan, the only difference being that the religious feuds, existing among the women solely, were not deadly, but only unholy and venomous. The war raged more particularly at this time between the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians who had not heeded the "Union revival," and the war-cry was "dancing." As the Baptists had agreed with the Episcopalians as to the harmlessness of dancing, the Presbyterian party felt in a rather depressed condition. The Gollyhaws and the Browns were the chief Episcopalians in the town, and after them the Conways and Mrs. Binkin. Over Mr. Forbes there had been a slight skirmish, but he took no part in the quarrel, and divided his favors equally between all the places of worship. On this occasion, Mrs. Gollyhaw, without saying a word even to her dearest rival, Mrs. Brown, had determined to bring this question to an issue by making dancing one of the features of the evening, and so had sent to Prairieville for the fifer. One of her reasons for keeping this plan a secret was that the Presbyterian young women would not come if they heard of the dancing. They refused to countenance dancing, and their Christian sisters, filled with unsanctified acumen, said plainly that "if Brother Perkins would only marry, his congregation would quit all sich nonsense." Mrs. Gollyhaw's plan for trapping the Presbyterians was this: the young people were to be engaged in playing "Skiptummerlou," which being interpreted means "Skip-to-my-Lou," a

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

game strangely like a quadrille; while this was in progress the fiddler and the fifer were to strike in with music to suit the refrain sung during the game, and thus turn it into a dance. Of course, the "Piscopals" and the Baptists would go on, and the Methodists would not leave the majority, but what would the Presbyterians do?

"They can't go home 'cause the boys won't take 'em," Lorena-Dora had said, in great glee, "an' they'll have to set out the evenin'." So Mrs. Gollyhaw kept the fifer in the kitchen, and the two chairs arranged for these musicians were put in a dim but accessible corner of the piazza.

It is not too much to say that Mrs. Gollyhaw yearned for this triumphant moment, and now that everything was in readiness, and the hour named in her invitations passed, she became impatient. Mr. Gollyhaw was detained at the "sto'"; but Lorena-Dora should be down by this time, and she paused in her walk to call up the stairs.

"I'm acomin', Mar," was answered from above, and a young woman very soon followed the voice, entering the parlor with an assured swing that caused her mother's eyes to shine with pride.

"You surely do look stylish, Lorena-Dora," she said, walking slowly around her daughter, "and nobody kin deny it if they do come from Jonesborough."

The young woman tossed her head. "I'm not 'fraid of no Mary-Lou Johnson," she answered, "and 'Mandy Brown's hardly got good sense if

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

she is away for her education. Lawsy me, the boys likes you just as well if you never go to school, and Mr. Forbes knows it all, anyhow."

"He is mighty smart," Mrs. Gollyhaw admitted, in a regretful way, for she was convinced that Lorena-Dora could have won him if she had chosen. Just at this moment the latch of the front gate clicked, and voices and steps were heard approaching the house. Mrs. Gollyhaw rose hastily, while Lorena-Dora, instantly beginning to hum a little tune, sauntered carelessly into the hall.

"Hardy-hardy-hardy!" came from the outer darkness in stentorian tones, causing the young hostess to start and run gayly towards the front door.

"Hardy yourself," she cried, "an' see how you like it."

"Mighty well, you bet," and a stout man with a wizened wife on his arm stamped up on the front porch, and putting down an ill-smelling lantern, held out both hands in greeting; Lorena-Dora put hers in them confidingly, with a coy

"Lawsy me, Mr. Brown!"—then Mrs. Gollyhaw came into the hall.

"How fine you are," Mr. Brown went on at the top of his voice, as he followed the ladies into the best bedroom where Mrs. Brown was to "lay her things."

"Nothin' more'n common," Mrs. Gollyhaw answered, with proud humility, glad to make this special speech to this guest, who was Mr. Dave Brown, son of "old Dave," one of the original

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

settlers, and Pecan's most skilful lawyer. "I am 'fraid 'Mandy and Miss Johnson 'll be very fash'-nubble," Mrs. Brown suggested; "I reckon eight o'clock 'll jist see 'em startin'."

"Well," Mrs. Gollyhaw answered, "when I was young we went early, and we come home early—but these days—"

"The style's changed, Mar," her daughter interrupted, with decision, "an' I told you so befo' you asked folks to come at 'chicken-roost time.'"

"Yes, you did," the mother answered, "an' you do keep up with the style, if you do live in Pecan."

"Pecan's as good as any place," Mr. Brown asserted, "an' we've got the prettiest girls in the country."

"Thet's so," and Lorena-Dora flourished back into the hall as another knock was heard.

After this the guests came thick and fast; all the clan of Browns and Fleishes, except Billy, who they said had gone to the ranch. Everybody who was anybody in Pecan was there, and every kind of dress except calico, and every kind of coat except a dress-coat. The Binkin girls arrived in gorgeous plaid gowns, Mrs. Binkin in a black alpaca that was only a little less straight than her limp black calico—little Mary in a pitifully out-grown white dress. Milly Conway came in a scarlet jacket and full black skirt that caused 'Reely Fleish to remark, "She's wore that for a generation," and Mr. Brown to retort, "All the same, she's the prettiest girl in the room," and she was. She and Tom were a picture as they came in; she

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

slight and dark, a tinge of color in her cheeks, her wavy hair a little ruffled by the wind, her scarlet lips just breaking into a smile, showing her little white teeth ; and her brother, tall and strong and fair, with long yellow hair brushed straight back, and a great mustache that nearly touched his shoulders. Tom was a dandy in his way ; he wore no coat, he never would, but his dark flannel shirt was laced up in front with a scarlet silk cord ; the boots that came above his knees were the finest, and about his waist there was a scarlet scarf tied in Mexican fashion. The butt of the pistol which projected from his hip-pocket was inlaid with silver ; his "sweetheart" he called it, and never moved without it. He was a "cow-boy," he said, and not a town man, and coats were an abomination. He was the best dancer in all that country, the most daring rider, the most unfailing shot—he did not drink, but he took life too carelessly ever to be a rich man. He was a local hero, in short, and half of the girls in Pecan had at one time or another felt a weakness for Tom Conway. He nodded gayly as he came into the room, then turned to see what was meant by the hush that had fallen on the company. The cause was not far to seek, for in the doorway stood old Mrs. Brown, as she was called, a portentous mass of humanity, and behind her, Amanda, her daughter, and the famed Miss Johnson. Mrs. Brown was in black silk that creaked like a new shoe with every breath of the occupant. 'Mandy, a limp edition of her mother, was arrayed in blue

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

silk, and Miss Johnson, a languid blonde, brought up the rear in a pink and garnet satin. Pecan stood silent; and Mrs. Brown, proud to treat this new wonder with motherly patronage, introduced the young women as "my girls," and excused their lateness on the plea of their Jonesborough habits. Besides, she explained, they had had some difficulty in deciding what to wear, as they wanted to "save their best clothes for the real big party 'Mandy's to have." Mrs. Gollyhaw grew very red in the face when she heard this—had she been outwitted after all? Was her effort to be eclipsed—this effort that she had intended should be an epoch in the history of Pecan? But she answered, pluckily :

"Yes, you oughter give one real big party; you're rich enough to do it. For me," smiling deprecatingly, "I can't do no better'n a candy-stew;" then she walked away, feeling some satisfaction at having disparaged the past entertainments of the Browns, and because she had made the plain statement that her own party was far below her ideal. The grandeur of the Brown party cast a gloom over the company for a while, and many a woman touched her cheap frock and felt that the glory of the evening had faded. Lorena-Dora, however, rose to the occasion gallantly, and by a clever thought brought the rich and poor ends of her party together by whispering to Mrs. Brown of the little trap that had been laid for the unwary Presbyterian sisters. Mrs. Brown took in the situation instantly, and loudly pro-

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

posed that the young people should play "Skip-to-my-Lou." All the company were made happy by her condescending persuasions, and immediately consented to her proposal. She called Tom Conway to lead out Miss Johnson; sent Dave Brown after Milly; Lorena-Dora was led to the front by Bob Fleish; the Binkin girls came noisily forward, determined to be conspicuous. Paul Forbes seldom joined in these games, and stood now with folded arms behind Mrs. Binkin's chair, watching the great ring form on the broad piazza. Presently all was ready except the odd man for the middle of the ring; this caused a moment's pause, when Mr. Gollyhaw himself, in all the glory of his "sto' clothes," dashed into the ring:

"I'll be odd, Johnny," he said; "but not for long;" and stamping his feet and clapping his hands, he raised the song:

"I wanter pardner,
Skiptummerlou—
I wanter pardner,
Skiptummerlou—
I wanter pardner,
Skiptummerlou—
Skiptummerlou, my darlin'."

Every voice took up the refrain, and Mr. Gollyhaw curvetted and skipped through the verse, ending by turning Milly Conway violently, and leaving Dave Brown as odd man. But Dave was not daunted, and taking steps that seemed beyond mortal legs, he struck up the second verse:

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

“ I'll git another one,
Skiptummerlou—
I'll git another one,
Skiptummerlou—
I'll git another one
Prettier than t'other one,
Skiptummerlou, my darlin'.”

ending by turning Miss Johnson and leaving Tom Conway free. The singing went on to the third verse, but in an absorbed, mechanical way, for Tom's dancing was watched intently—it was a thing Pecan was proud of, and they wondered if Miss Johnson had ever seen better.

““ Now we'll be married,
Skiptummerlou—
Now we'll be married,
Skiptummerlou—
Now we'll be married,
Skiptummerlou—
Skiptummerlou, my darlin'.”

And Tom, with a last flourish, stopped in front of Lorena-Dora. There was a shout of applause; then the first verse was taken up again, and the game became more noisy, as the older people standing outside the circle cheered on the players. Mrs. Binkin, who sat rather withdrawn in a corner, now and then answering Forbes, now and then answering Mary, felt as in a dream. This funny old game, with its merry tune and nonsensical words, was playing a cruel trick with her. She heard other voices singing and other foot-

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

steps on the floor ; loving eyes looked into hers, and strong hands clasped her own that were so weary ! She looked down on them as they lay in her lap—poor old hands that still went empty of a blessing. On and on the game went, while her heart grew bitter with memories that crowded upon her. Suddenly her thoughts rushed back to the present, in which Billy Fleish had dared to threaten Milly ! Her pulses bounded, and the blood leaped in her veins as she reached a quick decision. “Yes, she would tell Tom Conway.” At this moment Forbes touched her, saying, “This is a new feature.” She looked up with a start, and there beyond the group of old people she saw the musicians seated. Immediately the shrill fife and the sharp fiddle took up the tune. There was a moment's pause, then a shout of laughter as Dave Brown rushed across the circle and turned Miss Fleish—Miss Fleish, who was the most rigid non-dancer of all Mr. Perkins's flock ! Not realizing the situation, 'Reely danced merrily for a turn or two, until a voice called out, mockingly, “Miss 'Reely dancin' !” and she saw her Presbyterian sisters fleeing from the piazza. In vain she tried to stop ; Dave Brown held her hands firmly, turning her round and round, and Tom Conway, waving a large fan, danced after them.

Mrs. Binkin sprang up. As things stood, it was a dangerous joke for Tom Conway, and crossing quickly to the musicians she laid her hand on Uncle Green's fiddle, causing the fifer to

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

stop in amazement. In a moment all was still, and 'Reely left the piazza in a fury that fell indiscriminately on all around her. There was great confusion, but Miss Fleish was not to be placated, and left the house immediately, dragging the reluctant Bob with her. The other members of Mr. Perkins's flock contented themselves with retiring to the parlor, where they waited for the candy, and the game on the piazza, turning into a regular "swing-corner" quadrille, went on fast and furious.

On and on, while Mrs. Binkin waited—waited now in fear and trembling, for 'Reely Fleish had gone home so angry that if Billy had not gone to the ranch anything might happen! A shot from out the darkness was so easy, and Tom was such a good mark in the midst of the merry-makers. Such things had happened, and she looked out into the shadows with burning eyes. Now Tom *must* be warned.

The dance came to an end at last, and the dancers, heated and breathless, went in search of something cool—crowding about the buckets of lemonade, and squabbling merrily over the one dipper. It was then that Mrs. Binkin led Tom Conway aside. "'Reely Fleish told me to-day," she began, abruptly, "that Billy threatened that some one would be missing in the morning if Milly didn't come here with him"—she paused to catch her breath—"and she came with you."

"Well," the young man said, curtly, fastening his gray-blue eyes on hers relentlessly—"well?"

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

Meeting the look, the woman trembled, while a bloody mist seemed to come between them. She put out her hand against a post to steady herself. "That's enough," she whispered, turning her face away. "I only warned you to save you."

Tom turned on her quickly. "Enough?" he repeated, in a sharp, low voice; "you're right—it's enough to make Billy Fleish the missing man." Then he laid a heavy hand on Mrs. Binkin's shoulder. "But that's not all," he said, "and you know it, and you needn't think that you've done the mischief, for it's been a toss-up for many a day which should get the other. I've been waiting for a good reason; Billy's been waiting for a back-shot. Say on."

It was all true; and Mrs. Binkin knew, as surely as she knew anything, that one or the other of them would be found dead in the chaparral some day, with a bullet through his body. And better Billy Fleish than Tom. She had stopped her lover from bloodshed by keeping the story of her wrongs untold until he lay dying by a shot from an unknown hand; so the people said, but she knew that a Fleish had fired the shot, for her drunken husband had betrayed his friend. And Jack Conway, the son, had gone by the same hand; and now, must she still stay the Conways when her efforts had only served to deliver them into the hands of their enemies? According to the logic of feuds, one or the other must go, and now it seemed the Fleishes' turn. "Billy came to Milly this evening," she began, in a low voice,

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

without one mitigating suggestion—"Billy came and asked Milly to marry him."

"Oh!"

"And when Milly said 'No,' he said, 'Then you sha'n't marry nobody, Milly Conway,' and went off. I met him at the gate as he came out, and he said he was going to the ranch. But I don't trust him, and so I warn you." Like one of the Fates, she had clipped the thread of life without a sigh; had told the fatal story without a quiver in her voice.

Tom stood quite still with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and his stern white face looking out into the darkness. Straight and strong and tall above the common was the man revealed in the half-light that fell on his yellow hair, on his straight, clear-cut features, on his square, dimple-cleft chin. The woman drew a long breath that hissed between her teeth; and while she looked, the discordant voice of her eldest daughter broke on her dream: "Mar, ain't you never goin' to let Tom come?"

"Yes," Tom answered, quickly, "but I want your mother a little longer," and he led the way through the hall, taking his hat as he went, to the front porch; here he paused in the shadow. "Will you stay here as long as Milly stays?" he asked, "and if I don't come back in time will you go home and stay with her? You know the boys are off."

"Yes," Mrs. Binkin answered.

"And if Billy comes here," he went on, "tell

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

him that if he dares to speak to Milly, more than *one* Fleish will go."

"Billy's at the ranch."

"Maybe, and maybe not, but I'm goin' to see. If I miss him, and he come's here, you tell him what I say, and I won't be far behind him." He stepped off the porch, then turned back. "If Billy buries me," he said, grasping Mrs. Binkin's arm, "tell the boys I leave the job to them, and Milly to you."

A dry sob came from his listener. "Don't go, Tom," she whispered, "don't go!" But Tom was gone, and she stood alone in the dim light and listened while his footsteps faded away. A cry of terror rose in her heart, but she stifled it; better Billy than Tom, and she turned again into the house. Old Green was still calling out, the many feet were still skipping and shuffling over the rough floor, the shrill cry of the fife still rose and fell above the tumult, and little Mary and Forbes still waited near the chair she had left. She had thought herself hardened against all possible hopes and fears, and now she trembled as if she had never before heard of a man's being shot. And she was foolish to tremble when she had been relieved of the dreadful fear that Billy would come and shoot Tom while he danced. She should be thankful now, and not afraid, and so when Milly came to ask for Tom she made her voice quite cheerful. "He has been called off," she said, "and I will take you home and stay the night with you if Tom does not come

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

back in time." Her voice was quite cheerful, but Milly looked troubled.

"What called him off?" she asked.

Mrs. Binkin laughed a little as if amused. "You must ask him," she said; "Tom don't tell me his business."

"I shall be glad to see you home," Forbes put in, quickly.

"That is not the trouble," the girl answered; "but Tom, where has he gone?" and she looked wistfully at Mrs. Binkin.

"It's no use taking trouble on trust," Mrs. Binkin said; "Tom said he wouldn't be gone long; wait and see."

"Come and walk a little with me," and Forbes led her away.

It was an exquisite night, and the moonlight lay like a silver sheet over the whole wide land: a royal light that made deep shadows—very black, ragged shadows under the deformed live-oaks that Tom passed in his walk; dangerous shadows that he scanned very closely, with his dainty pistol held at full cock. He was going straight to Fleish's house, and it behooved him to be careful. Of course he would not take any advantage of Billy; his full intention was to call him out and give him a fair chance; if Billy could kill him, well and good. He paused and drew a long breath; it would be hard luck to be killed by such a cur! Meanwhile, he knew that Billy would take every possible advantage of him, so he watched the shadows.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

Reaching the house he knocked on the door very quietly, and Mrs. Fleish appearing, he took off his hat and asked for Billy. The woman started a little when she saw who the visitor was, and looked back over her shoulder as if for help. "Par," she called, "Par, where's Billy?"

"Gonner ranch," came tipsily from within.

"All right," Tom answered, cheerfully, and he turned away with a pleasant "Good-night!" at the same time taking care to step from the light of the candle into the shadow of the house. He looked about him cautiously before he moved again, and while he waited he heard voices inside talking eagerly, with 'Reely's rising angrily above the rest. This made him feel safe from any ambush, for he remembered that Bob had returned to the party; and the old man being drunk had probably told the truth, for which 'Reely was scolding him; so Tom walked away, feeling out of danger for the present. He walked very rapidly now, going through the Binkin lot as a short cut to his own house. By the light of the moon the servant, Josh, was made to saddle a horse, and Tom got an ugly knife from his room and stuck it in his belt in case of accidents; then telling the boy not to wait for him, he rode away, humming a tune as he galloped across the open country. No man could be in hiding where there was not a cactus bigger than his hat, and he kept up this pace until he neared a dense growth of mesquite, and just out of range he paused. Billy might have seen him coming and be hiding there,

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

and drawing his pistol he rode a little nearer. Then he reflected that as Billy had no immediate reason for expecting him he would not be waiting for him in the brush, and so rode on more confidently.

The ground was hard, and the sound of his horse's tread travelled far in the dead silence, and Billy Fleish, who was on his way back to Pecan, heard the thud and paused. After a moment he turned aside into the brake. It would be safer to wait and watch for a little while. He had told the truth in saying that he was going to the ranch, but once there it was in vain that he tried to be quiet. The moon rose so wonderfully clear, and picture after picture of the party going on in town came before him, until he could stand it no longer, and springing from his bed he had dressed himself. He must go, and if Milly had deceived him—he paused a moment and remembered the words he had said in another's hearing: "If she goes with Forbes, somebody will be missing in the morning."

"And somebody shall!" And his voice echoed strangely in the empty house. Quickly he had saddled his horse, and, arming himself, he had ridden away towards the town. Like Tom, he rode rapidly across the open prairie, but very carefully when he reached the brush; more carefully than Tom in that he often stopped to listen, and in one of these pauses he heard the approaching footsteps. Just where Billy stopped there was a sink in the land, and any one following the

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

trail would have to ride down and up this wash-out before passing Billy's hiding-place, giving Billy a full view of him during all the crossing. He had not long to wait before he could hear that the horse was coming at an easy trot. "Not sneakin'," he thought, and watched the opening of the trail eagerly. Suddenly a man on horse-back paused there—Tom Conway!—and Billy trembled as if he had seen a ghost. His breath came thick and fast; his heart seemed galloping madly. Tom on this trail that led to but one place—the Fleishes' ranch! It could mean but one thing—Tom was hunting for him!

In the brilliant moonlight Tom paused and looked about him. The silver embroidery on his broad hat glittered back an answer to the moon; his bright spurs, the polished chains and buckles on his fancy bridle, each caught its little spark of shining. "Dandy Tom" the people called him. He had no reason for stopping, for he had put aside as foolish the thought of ambush. Billy would never hunt for him; he even smiled a little at the thought. He evidently did not think, as he waited there in the shadowless light, so erect and so motionless that both horse and rider seemed cut in stone, what a mark he made. He had paused without reason; perhaps it was the power of the hate-bright eyes that were watching him.

Once more Tom glanced about him, then up to the sky. A quick shot, a cry hushed in its birth,

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

an aimless stabbing of the spurs, and horse and rider sprang headlong down the bluff.

Billy did not move ; as still as death he waited, even after the horse had regained its footing and stood up trembling by his prostrate master, held by the dead hand still clutching the bridle. Billy watched, but his enemy did not stir ; he lay there in a heap, face down in the sand.

"Dead !" Billy whispered, while a great fear seized him. "Dead !" he repeated, and the wind that was rushing by seemed to say the word in a hundred tones, and the moonlight seemed to tremble with him. They hanged men for murder, and this was murder. He hadn't given Tom a chance. Aye, but nobody had seen it, and no living soul should find it out. Tom's horse was beginning to struggle, and Billy rode quickly down the bank. Even then he paused a moment, but the crumpled figure lay too still to have any life in it, and, dismounting, Billy caught the frightened horse.

He was not long in tying his own horse to a bush nor in lifting the dead man across the other horse, where he hung limp and straight ; then he picked up the broad Mexican hat whose embroideries had shown so gayly a moment before, and, after looking about in the sand for further tokens, he led Tom's horse, carrying his dead master, down the rapidly deepening gulch. Farther down there was a sudden drop in the gulch itself, and it was to this spot that he hastened, or tried to hasten, for the sand and gravel seemed

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

purposely to give under his steps, and as one in a nightmare he strove to walk faster, yet seeming always unable. And now a thousand fears beset him—suppose his horse should break away and go into the town without him ; suppose Tom had been waiting on the edge of the gulch for others ; suppose they should come and track him ; suppose his enemy on the horse he led—suppose he was not dead ! This thought stopped him, and he looked over his shoulder fearfully, he shook himself, he was a fool. Of course Tom was dead ; and he went back and looked into the wide-open eyes, and touched the fancy shirt all drenched with blood—of course he was dead, shot straight through the heart, and Billy hurried on. It could not be very far to the drop in the gulch now—a drop of thirty feet ; it would make a deep grave for Tom and for his horse, too ; yes, a deep grave, and here it was ; he could tell by the denser growth on the sides of the gulch, for there was always some water in this deep place which caused this unusual fertility. He went carefully now, not being sure of the edge in the treacherous shadows ; but the horse held back, and Billy had to persuade him nearer step by step—step by step until by a great effort, and at the same time a great risk, he could tie the bridle to the branch of a tree hanging over the drop. It was a dangerous experiment, but fear had made Billy wellnigh fearless, and he ran this risk almost without knowing it. It was soon done ; then, withdrawing a few steps, he drew his pistol

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

and fired. There was a mad lunge and an almost human cry, a breaking and crashing of branches, a splash, and some crystal drops thrown high in the moonlight, then all was still, horribly still ! Billy waited and listened, then filling the dead man's hat with gravel he dropped that over, too, and, turning away, ran with all his strength. It did not take him a moment to mount, and, driving his spurs in cruelly, to dash up the side of the gulch and along the narrow trail. The long, swift run across the plain restored him somewhat, and he went into the town and up to his father's house at a moderate pace. He let himself in as quietly as he could, but 'Reely, being anxious after Tom's visit, heard him, and came quickly to the store-room where he was filling his whiskey flask.

"Tom Conway's been here," she said, without preliminary explanation, and the whiskey splashed all over the floor giving up a strong green smell that augured ill for the man who drank much of it ; but Billy scarcely took time to swear at the accident so eager was he to put the flask to his lips. "An' you'd better not drink too much," 'Reely went on, disagreeably. "Tom's huntin' you right now, and you'll need a level head."

"Tom Conway be —— !" Billy muttered, sullenly, clearing his throat after the fiery draught: "I ain't 'fraid er him, ner none like him."

"'Cause you never sees him," 'Reely retorted. "I notice you're mighty shy of him." Billy paused for a moment ; the longing to brag that he had

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

already "finished Tom" was strong upon him; but the vision of a man he had seen hanged—and the memory of Dick and Phil and Jim Conway—deterred him, and instead he asked, "Is the party done?" At once the flood-gates of 'Reely's wrath were opened, and her story came out angrily, and Billy listening, chuckled—"So you won't git your Perkins?" he said, when she paused, then laughed loud and long—a nervous, drunken laugh, that sent 'Reely off in a rage and brought his mother to inquire into the noise. "You'd better go to bed," she said. "You're drunk, an' Tom Conway's a-huntin' you." Billy was a little beyond himself now, and he laughed again as he answered:

"Tom Conway an' his horse is down in the bottom o' Jenkins's washout, plumb dead, an' I done it, old girl," laying one hand on her shoulder and swaying her back and forth. "Dandy Tom stood on top the gulch in the moonlight," he went on, more slowly, "but he'll never look at the moon no mo', for one good bullet's in Tom's heart, and one's in his horse's head—see thar!" and drawing his pistol he showed the two empty chambers to the terrified woman who now clung to him.

"An' Dick, an' Jim, an' Phil?" she whispered, "or they might heng you, Billy?" His own fears blanching the face of another and sounding in his ears sobered Billy for a moment.

"Not if you don't tell, Mar," he gasped—"not if you don't tell! Nobody kin find Tom if you don't tell. I throwed him deep in the water, Mar. Oh, don't tell!" pleading, despairingly. Then he

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

turned away, crying "I'm goin' to the party," and rushed into the open air.

And the mother, leaning against the wall, seemed scarcely ably to breathe.

"Tom Conway dead—dead!" Over and over again she whispered the words, hardly comprehending them—"Tom Conway dead!"—it seemed an impossible thing that Billy should kill Tom Conway. She would go to-morrow—she would go now, why not now?—go now and see! She was a fool! And snatching up a tin cup she poured for herself a draught as fiery, if not as deep, as that her son had taken—she must find courage somehow.

III

"How my heart leaps to danger!
I have been so long a pilot on rough seas,
And almost rudderless!"

At Mrs. Gollyhaw's the party was proving a great success, and the hostess felt that the grand supper coming after the candy-pulling would surely make her entertainment an era in the history of the town. In her mind she heard the words "Mis' Gollyhaw's big Candy-stew" sounding far into the coming years. The house was empty now, for every one was in the yard, where the tables had been arranged for the candy, and where the lamps that had been carried out, and the lanterns in the trees, combined with the

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

moonlight, made the outside shadows very black. But inside the ring of light all was noisily merry ; the whole company was divided into couples "pulling together," as they termed it, a graceful motion, and a rapid mode of making the candy of the proper consistency. Flushed with success, Mrs. Gollyhaw made her way in and out among the tables, laughing, and warning the boys not to "wrap the girls," which meant that they were not to stretch the candy and then wind it about the young women. "The girls is dressed too fine," she said, "and there's sumpen nice comin' if you behave;" which judiciously combined warning and promise made things more quiet than usual. So the candy was pulled, and put aside in pieces of paper and pocket-handkerchiefs to be taken home. And Billy Fleish, in the outer darkness—of soul as well as of night—watched it all with angry, jealous eyes. It was some time before he could find Milly Conway, and this because he looked for her in the crowd, where she was not. He had not come to the party with the intention of joining in the pleasures, but only with a wild desire to see what Milly was doing. She had told him the truth about her coming to the party with Tom. 'Ree-ly's story had proved that ; but now that Tom was dead, what was she doing ? Mrs. Binkin he easily found, tall and straight, moving like a black shadow among the bright groups, "dishing" the candy. Presently, while Billy watched, she disappeared in the shadow. He kept an

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

eager lookout, fearing discovery, but nothing approached him, and she shortly reappeared, but without little Mary, who had been with her. The whiskey Billy had taken, and which had overthrown him for a moment, served now to steady his nerves and sharpen his faculties, and he moved carefully towards the spot which Mrs. Binkin seemed to haunt. Who was in that shadow? Milly Conway, he answered to himself, for she was the only girl missing from the circle of light. Nearer and nearer he crept, until the shadow was between him and the light, and he saw two figures dimly outlined—Milly and Forbes! He drew a long, sharp breath, stopping suddenly, for Milly turned her head.

"What was that?" she asked, and Forbes's voice answered:

"I heard nothing."

Then they resumed their talk in low tones, which Billy strove to distinguish. He did not dare go nearer, and from where he was he could hear only the murmur of their voices, and watch their heads that occasionally bent in the act of listening, or in the earnestness of speech. What were they saying—what did this mean—would she marry Forbes? He would shoot him first; and a mad frenzy seized him. Why not shoot now? He could so surely do it while he suffered this sharp torture—why not shoot him now? No, not now, later—there would come a better time before this night was done, and he chuckled scornfully. Milly and Forbes might have heard him if they

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

had not risen at that moment to follow the crowd into the supper-room. Close up to the windows Billy crept, and saw that at no time did Forbes leave Milly's side ; and Mrs. Binkin saw it too ; and in her secret heart she trembled. Suddenly she had come to be quite sure that Forbes meant nothing ; Milly was clever, and it was only to pass the time that Forbes thought of her at all, and when a new situation offered he would go away quietly with a friendly good-bye. The more she watched them, the more surely she came to this conclusion, and determined that Tom must be told. This brought to her mind the non-appearance of Tom, about which she was becoming very anxious. It would have been better, was her bitter thought, to let things take their course, to have let Billy Fleish shoot Forbes, for Milly would then have had a "life-long sorrow" to comfort her—a beautiful "might-have-been" to fill every vacant hour ! As it was, Forbes going without "speaking," Milly would simply be "left," as the young people expressed it—a thing far worse than death ! Her darling the laugh of Pecan ? Already she seemed to hear the gibing comments of her own daughters, and, still worse, of 'Reely Fleish. And looking across the room at Milly's sweet face, so pale and troubled with anxiety for Tom, and yet smiling whenever Forbes spoke, she made a vow that either he should marry the girl, or the town should know that she had refused him.

"He shall," she muttered—"he shall, or else

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

die," and she moved with the crowd back to the parlor. At last the party was over, and Forbes offered his services as escort to Milly and Mrs. Binkin.

"Yes," Mrs. Binkin answered, "an' I'm to spend the night with you, Milly—that is, if Tom ain't there before us. But the girls will fuss if they know it," she went on, "so you an' Mary an' Mr. Forbes go on, an' I'll slip over after the girls are quiet. But if Tom's there, let Mr. Forbes stop on his way back and tell me."

So it was that Billy's fury was added to by seeing the quartet leave the house, then by seeing Mrs. Binkin turn back, while Forbes, with Milly leaning on his arm, and little Mary holding his other hand, walked away slowly in the quiet moonlight.

It did not take Mrs. Binkin long to reach her own house, where her daughters were saying uproarious last words to their escorts; but the young men said good-bye when they saw her, and Mrs. Binkin had the satisfaction of fastening the door immediately, and putting out the lights. She waited a little while after she heard her daughters lock their door, then taking a small bundle of night-clothes, she made her own door fast, and went softly through the back-lot and bars to the long lane.

She walked rapidly, pausing only once to look back, being just in time to see the light in her daughters' room vanish. This made her feel more secure as to their curiosity, but she still

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

felt a desperate anxiety as to what she should or should not find at the Conways'. Swiftly, swiftly she hurried down the long lane, with her head bent, and her mind working busily to the exclusion of all sights and sounds. How could she carry out her oath concerning Forbes—how could she save Milly from being the town's talk?

Suddenly she stopped; in the dead silence of the waning night she heard men's voices in suppressed, angry tones.

She crept a little farther into the shadow of a clump of mesquite; and now she could see them quite clearly—one was slim and tall, and one was stout. So much she could see, but she could not hear save the bitter fury in their tones. She wished that she had had her wits about her, and had not come so near. 'Who were they?

Suddenly she saw the thin man strike the other full in the face, and his voice rising with the blow he struck, she recognized Forbes. Then the figures became one in a deadly struggle.

She crept a little nearer; her heart throbbed with a wild excitement.

"Aye," she whispered, as something flashed high in the moonlight, glittering for a moment, "they are down now—and a groan!" Still they struggled; then one man rose, and it was the slim one; the other lay still.

To her dazed mind only one realization came, Forbes had murdered somebody. She went slowly forward. Forbes still stood over his prostrate foe, looking down on him; then he lifted his

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

head and the moonlight struck full on his face so white, so drawn, that she scarcely recognized it. She laid her hand on his arm. He started with a suppressed cry, and staggered like a drunken man.

"Come away," she whispered, taking the long knife from his nerveless hand and dropping it by the dead man—"come away." Swiftly she retraced her steps, Forbes following like a child, until reaching her own small barn, she led him in, and shutting the door lighted a lantern that was hanging against the wall, and looked calmly in the face before her.

"Whom have you murdered?" she asked, her dark eyes shining like coals of fire, and her face almost as white as Forbes's—"who is it?"

"Fleish," he whispered—"Billy Fleish," and he trembled as if he had a chill.

Mrs. Binkin started—Billy Fleish! Then where was Tom Conway?

"I killed him in self-defence," Forbes went on.

"You struck him first," she said, quickly, her thoughts flying back to their starting-point, and ending in the power she now had over Forbes—"I saw you strike him."

"Yes," he whispered, looking down on his hands that he was wiping over and over again on his handkerchief, while an idle memory came to him of Lady Macbeth. "Yes, I did." Then he sighed, a sigh that was almost a sob, and a great shudder swept over him like a wave.

"And that will hang you," Mrs. Binkin went

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

on, relentlessly. The young man started towards the door, but the woman stood before him.

"If you run away," she said, quietly, "they will arrest you on suspicion—if you go quietly home no one will think of you in the matter."

"You will know," and his eyes flashed as if he would like to double his crime. Mrs. Binkin laughed derisively.

"I have no wish to hang you, Paul Forbes," she said, "and I hate the Fleishes."

"And you will not tell?" he questioned, eagerly.

"There is only one thing will make me tell," she answered, slowly—"if you go away without asking Milly Conway to marry you. If you do that, I shall do my best to hang you." And, drawing a step nearer, she looked at him closely. "There is blood on your shirt and collar," she said, "and on your cuffs; that will betray you. I have your clean clothes in the house; I will go and fetch them, and you can change them here." As she had let herself out, so she let herself into the house, and getting the clothes and a flask, went back to the barn.

"Be quick," she whispered, handing the clothes in; and while she waited outside in the silence, she tried in vain to follow out the possibilities of the situation. Only one thought stayed with her: she could now make Forbes offer himself to Milly; and when Forbes opened the door to her, this was her only plan. She gathered up his things quickly, making them into a compact bundle, saying, suggestively, "I am your wash-

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

erwoman." Then she handed him the flask. "Drink some of that," she said, "then go home and go to bed; in the morning get up and teach your school, as usual, and you'll be perfectly safe—unless—" pausing a moment, "you break your promise to me," and she held the door open as if there could be no doubt of his obedience. Forbes moved, then stopped a moment and looked at her. She puzzled him—she was a different woman to him now, and how was it that she had the power to order him? All this passed through his mind in a confused way as he looked at her, but her eyes did not flinch; instead, they seemed to burn brighter and brighter, until he could no longer bear them, and he turned away.

"And these clothes?" he asked, uneasily, "you will send them to me?"

Mrs. Binkin looked at the averted face for a moment with a slow, contemptuous knowledge growing in her eyes; then she said, tersely:

"Have I lost any of your clothes yet, Mr. Forbes?"

It was only a natural anxiety that made Forbes ask this question; but it was a mistake. And Mrs. Binkin at once determined that the clothes should *not* be washed; instead, she would look them over carefully, and see what they could prove in case of necessity. So Forbes passed out and away, having put himself more than ever in this woman's power; while she, full of new suspicions, hurried to her own house, where once

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

more she made noiseless entrance, hid the clothes between the mattresses of her own bed, then putting the flask in its usual place, began afresh her walk to the Conways'. While she had waited for Forbes to change his clothes, she had tried in vain to think ; now as she walked the thoughts came thick and fast, and the question presented itself : Did she want Milly to marry this man—this weak coward, as she now called Forbes? Why had he not defied her? She would have honored him for shouldering his deed, and the fact of the first blow would never have been revealed. All Pecan would have approved him, and have taken his part ; he would have established his character forever ! Instead, he had proved himself a pitiful coward. Would it not be better to go after him at once, and, retracting her promise, tell him she would denounce him? Surely this would solve the problem, and prevent people from saying that Milly had been "left."

She paused before she entered the lane to decide. Poor creature, he would die of fright ! It would be more merciful to protect him ; and once let Milly know his cowardice, she would never marry him ; or, if the worst came to the worst, she could put the whole matter into Tom's hands. At all events, she would wait until the morning—until Tom came.

She was weary now and faint with all she had gone through, and leaned against the corner of the fence, feeling sick and dizzy. Suddenly the memory came to her of what was lying in the

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

lane, and if she fell ill where she was, and the bloody clothes were found, both she and Forbes would be arrested. She stood up, she must find strength to go, and she had been a fool not to bring the little flask ; it would have helped her now. She turned her face to the wind and loosened the neck of her frock ; this made her feel better, and she started resolutely on her journey. She was a fool to mind passing Billy Fleish just because he was dead ; it was much safer than to pass him living at this time of the night—or morning rather, for now the light was beginning to gather in the east.

Swiftly she walked, looking straight ahead, and striving to forget what she was approaching. In the morning she would have to pass it again—she would have to pretend to discover it ! She had planned to go home before her daughters missed her, and if she did this she would have to be the discoverer. If she waited, and stayed late enough for them to know that she had planned to spend the night with Milly, while pretending to be at home, what questions might not be asked ?

Difficulties seemed to thicken. She wished that she had cried out “Murder !” when she had first heard the noise—any sensible woman would have done it ; and she would have done it if she had known Forbes then as she knew him now ; and she began to wonder what had driven him to this act, for he was cautious and would think a long time before he would strike a man—it would never be “a word and a blow” with him. She

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

had heard him say once that the law was the best weapon a man could use in any case. Yes, and now that she thought of it, she had begun to distrust him from that very moment. For how could the making a man pay costs and damages wipe out an insult? Even Billy Fleish would have scorned that! No, Milly would never marry Forbes.

She was near the spot now—she knew it by the clump of mesquite; and she crossed over to the other side of the lane and walked as close to the fence as possible, turning her eyes to look away across the forsaken field. But do what she would, she saw it lying there, a black mass, with its face turned up to the ghastly light that was neither night nor day.

If she had not been so weary she would have run. Why should she be so foolish, she who had seen death in every shape and form! Yet when she reached the house where the door which had been left on the latch for her could be bolted, she bolted it hastily; in some degree it shut out that dead thing that only a few short hours ago she had spoken to so harshly. Poor Billy! he had said that some one would be missing in the morning, and his words had come true.

She crept up the ladder to the loft, where a lamp burned low in a far corner; she shut the trap-door carefully and fastened it, again feeling glad that she was shutting out that dead thing.

For one moment she leaned over the two sleeping creatures who were so dear to her, and on

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

Milly's cheeks she saw tears "Worryin' for Tom," she said to herself. "If Forbes had caused these tears?" and for a second she wished that the struggle in the lane had terminated differently. She undressed and lay down on the couch which had been prepared for her; but she did not extinguish the light; the darkness would be unbearable in her present state of "foolish nervousness," as she was pleased to term her condition of mind, and she dreaded wakefulness. But the long night of anxiety and of excitement, coming after a long day of work, proved too much for her, and exhausted nature sank quickly and mercifully into a heavy, dreamless slumber.

Heavily she slept while the moon waned and the stars burned themselves out—heavily, dreamlessly, until the sun, rising in a cloudless sky, streamed over the shadowless land—struck across Billy Fleish's dead white face, and tipped with gold the tangled brush that met over "Jenkins's Washout." It would take the strongest noon-day beam to reach Tom Conway's resting-place, but Billy lay revealed by the earliest light, and the cows coming up the long lane to be milked stopped short, and congregated there with pitiful lowings, pawing the ground and moving about in circles, but coming no nearer. Josh, who milked the cows, was a patient negro, not unwilling to linger over his work; so it was not until his mother, Judy, compelled him that he went to look after the cows.

"You've been efter Miss Milly's horse long

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

ernough to grow the corn you gin him," she said. "You don't take no longer w'en all ther stock's yer, an' Marse Tom 'll be a-comin' soon, an' 'll want you body an' soul," her voice rising until it waked the girls up-stairs. "So go an' git them cows, er I'll make you b'lieve you're struck by lightnin'." Josh rose slowly, having been struck by this kind of lightning before, probably, and went to the front gate followed by his mother. "Thar they all is," she went on, "all-er-'em down the lane walkin' roun' an' moanin'. I reckon' it's a snake makin' 'em so onressless; go an' see."

"Thet's cur'us, certain," and Josh picked up a slat that had fallen from the gate; and Milly and Mary, hearing the talk, watched from the up-stairs windows; but Mrs. Binkin still slept heavily. It was not long, but before Josh reached the cows he stopped with a cry—a terrified, tremulous cry—and stood as if turned to stone! Then Judy ran, and Milly felt as if her heart had frozen in her bosom. What had happened—where was Tom?

She could not move from where she leaned on the window-sill, even when Judy came running back silent, and dragging Josh with her. The woman reached the house, shut the door after her, then labored up the ladder-steps, panting and terror-stricken, crying under her breath:

"My God! My God! who done it?—whar's Marse Tom—Marse Tom!" pushing open the trap-door and sinking on the floor with her feet still on the ladder, wringing her hands and swaying back and forth, whispering, "Mister Billy Fleish, Mis-

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

ter Billy Fleish dead out thar in ther road, an' whar's Marse Tom—Marse Tom?"

Slowly Milly came towards her, listening in fascinated terror, while little Mary cast herself upon her mother.

"Wake up, wake up!" she called. "Oh, mother, mother!" and Mrs. Binkin started with a cry of alarm. She was near betraying herself in that moment; then the dark story came back to her only too quickly, and the paleness of her face as she sank back on the pillow could easily be attributed to Judy's awful words. A little while she lay there realizing the situation; then she got up quickly, giving rapid, decided orders.

"Go across the field, Judy," she said, "and ask Mr. Dave Brown to come here as quick as he can; you can tell him 'fore he gets here, Judy, but don't tell him till he's on the way—he must see an' hear it first 'fore any crowd comes." Her firm voice restored Judy, and she rose to the occasion. "Don't speak to anybody on the way," Mrs. Binkin went on, "an' don't let the Browns see that anything is wrong, do you hear?"

"I do, Mis' Binkin."

"An' tell Josh to dish up breakfast; if we starve an' take on they'll think we did it."

"That's so," and Judy disappeared down the ladder.

"An' we'll dress as fast as we can, Milly," turning to the girl, who had sunk down on the bed; "we know nothin' about it, an' we mustn't know

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

anything about it. None of the boys are here," she went on, "but I'll take care of you."

"Where is Tom?" the girl whispered.

Mrs. Binkin shook her head. "That's more than I can say," she answered, "but if he'd killed Billy Fleish he wouldn't have run away—no, no more than if he'd killed a dog."

"I did not think Tom had done it," Milly faltered.

"Yes you did," Mrs. Binkin answered, decidedly, more decidedly than she had ever spoken to Milly before; but she wished to rouse the girl, especially as her words had brought up another disagreeable complication. "An' if you, Tom's own sister," she went on, "is willin' to put it on Tom, other people will, I know."

Milly sprang up, flushing hotly. "I did not—I did not mean that!" she cried. "Tom never would have run away—never!"

"Of course not," Mrs. Binkin answered, quickly; "Tom is no coward."

Which last suggestion caused Milly to be downstairs in a little while, and they were quietly eating breakfast when Mr. Brown came in. It might have been the exertion of climbing so many fences, or it might have been that he had become infected with Judy's horror; whatever it was, Mr. Brown looked quite pale when he came. He sat down for a little while to hear the story of the finding afresh before he went down the lane; then he asked Mrs. Binkin to go with him as witness.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

"Josh and Judy saw it," she demurred.

"I just want you to witness how I finds him," Mr. Brown urged ; "Josh and Judy 'll have to go, too."

Mrs. Binkin paused a moment, looking out of the back windows through the dense shade of the pecan-trees to where the river flowed so peacefully.

"Mrs. Binkin?" and she turned to find Mr. Brown looking at her curiously. She started a little, then gave him back look for look, and Brown, turning away, said, quietly :

"Come, Mis' Binkin," and she, with Josh and Judy, followed him. At the door he paused.

"You mustn't as much as look out ther winder, Miss Milly," he said, "for a trial might come, an' I don't want you called."

"Very well," Milly answered, and Mrs. Binkin looked at him gratefully ; he had won her help now, no matter what happened.

It was a horrid picture they paused beside in the lane, where the cows were still moving about and pawing up the dust—an awful picture. But Mr. Brown, brushing away the flies, made them look at it as it was, until they had seen where the mouth was swollen, as from a blow ; and the clothes torn, as with a struggle ; and the knife that evidently had done the work was the dead man's own knife. They could all prove this, for without touching it or moving it from where it lay in the dust, a little space away from the body, all covered with blood, the initials "B. F.,"

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEWE

roughly cut in the handle, were plainly visible. Further, Mr. Brown looked about him on the ground where were the marks of the struggle, but any marks of footsteps leading away from the spot had been entirely destroyed by the cows. He put all these observations down in a little book, for Pecan had no coroner, and then sent Judy for Mr. Perkins, the Fleishes' minister, who must tell the news to the family, sent Josh for help to move the body, and asked Mrs. Binkin for a mattress on which to place the dead man.

"Yes," she said, quickly, glad of the excuse to go, for she was sick with the heat of the sun and the awful picture, and she turned away; but at the first step Mr. Brown laid his hand on her arm.

"Where's Tom Conway?" he asked, looking her full in the face.

"God only knows," she answered, without hesitation, meeting his look unshrinkingly. "God only knows," she repeated, in a preoccupied way; for Tom's absence was a darker mystery to her than it possibly could be to any one else. She knew that Tom had gone in search of Billy—and here lay Billy dead by another hand—and Tom was gone—where was he? "God only knows," she once more repeated; then realizing that Mr. Brown's hold had not relaxed, nor his look moved from her face, she became angry.

"Tom never did that," she cried, scornfully; "he'd never have any scuffle with a Fleish, an' if he had killed Billy Fleish he wouldn't have run

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

any more than if he had killed a dog, an' you know that, Dave Brown."

Mr. Brown turned away.

"There's sumpen in that, Mis' Binkin; but then who done it?"

"That 'll have to be searched after," she answered, but she did not look at him this time.

Swiftly she sped with her heart in a tumult. Dave Brown's close observations would entirely verify her story should she have occasion to tell it, and she felt that she had Forbes entirely in her power; then—if Dave Brown had found any footsteps he would have found hers! And her heart seemed almost to stop. A woman's footsteps found just then and there—what would the consequences have been? She hurried along more swiftly still, almost running now as another fear rose up to torment her. The word mattress had made her remember where she had hidden Forbes's clothes; she must put them somewhere else that was safer. Those clothes must not be found nor stolen. She felt that Forbes distrusted her quite as much as she distrusted him, and would take them if he could. Entering the house, Mrs. Binkin put the clothes hastily into her own trunk, which she always kept locked; they would be safe there; then she hurried into the young women's room, where there was a small bed, and, pulling off the mattress, she answered the questions of her daughters, who were just beginning to waken, without warning.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

"I want the mattress for Billy Fleish," she said; "he's dead out there in the lane."

"Dead!" they screamed—"Billy Fleish!" but their mother was gone, dragging the mattress after her. Outside she folded it, throwing it across her shoulder. A light straw thing it was, thin and hard, but answering very well for this sleep that Billy Fleish was sleeping.

Josh met her half way, but she did not turn back when lightened of her load, for she felt she must be at hand to watch every development of this case. She was bound up in it, tied hard and fast by the past and by the knowledge she possessed.

She watched them lay the dead man on the mattress with his hat by his side; she had dusted it and had pulled his coat straight; then, while they waited for Mr. Perkins, she ran home again for a sheet and spread it over all. Dave Brown watched her carefully, but could make nothing of her; keen as he was, this case baffled him. What was it that she knew of this murder, and why would she not tell? And when Mr. Perkins came, and, turning away, declined to look at the dead man, she almost laughed in her scorn of him.

"He couldn't be more scared if he'd done it himself," she said. Had she done it?

She walked beside Dave Brown as they followed the little procession that grew as it advanced, and as each new-comer asked one unvarying question when he or she heard the story, so Mrs.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

Binkin gave one unvarying answer. "Where's Tom Conway?" they would ask; then Mrs. Binkin would say to them what she had said to Dave Brown, and Dave Brown, listening, heard how the people acquiesced in her reasons. More than this, as the crowd grew greater he heard the men repeating Mrs. Binkin's reasons convincingly to their fellows, and found her shining black eyes fixed triumphantly on his. What did it mean? At the Fleishes' the scene was still more puzzling to him, for 'Reely, rushing out, with loud cries, threw herself on the dead body, and called down curses on Tom Conway—Tom, who had come there to hunt Billy, and, of course, Tom had found him and had done this deed; but the mother, half dazed and stupid, shook her head as she looked down on her son, and said, slowly:

"Tom Conway never done it. Billy came home after Tom was gone, an' told me all about it."

The crowd stood mute until, after a moment's pause, 'Reely sprang forward, seizing her mother's hands.

"Billy did come home after Tom was gone," she cried, "but he went out again, and then Tom done it;" but the mother shook her head.

"Tom never done it!" she persisted. "Tom never done it!"

"She's gone off her senses," and 'Reely led her into the house, while Bob Fleish and his father stood vowing vengeance on the Conways.

Mr. Brown could make nothing of it at all, and Mrs. Binkin turned away weak and faint. What

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

did the mother mean? Had Billy killed Tom before Forbes and hemet? The thought was absurd, of course it was; but this charge of murder that was being laid at Tom's door was a shameful thing, and she longed for Tom to come back and put an end to it; if things went much further, she would give Forbes time to get away and then tell her story. To kill a man was one thing, but murder like this was quite another, and Tom should not be disgraced by such a charge.

She spent the rest of the day between her own house and the Conways', watching at one place for Tom, and at the other trying to do her work; and as the hours went by and no news came, the mystery seemed to double itself. But the noon-day Sun found out the story as well as sight could tell it, for he looked on Milly, weary with watching and feigning; on Mrs. Binkin, once more folding and hiding the bloody garments; on Billy Fleish, dead and still; on his mother, looking at her son's pistol to see where the two empty chambers proved his drunken confession; on Forbes, walking fast and far through the long afternoon, only turning his face home again when the sun was setting; on Tom Conway, lying dead in "Jenkins's Washout." The Sun found it all between his rising and his setting; and the Moon, who had seen it all, came after, and she told it to the Wind that went rushing by across the wide, waste plain, stirring the bushes that hid Tom's burial-place, and the sheet that covered Billy Fleish.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

IV

“ My life is a torn book. But at the end
A little page, quite fair, is saved—

Which I shall take safe up to Heaven with me.”

The funeral was over, and Pecan had returned to its every-day routine ; but it still was stirred by the late excitement, and by the wonder at Tom Conway's continued absence.

The first impression, that Tom Conway had not killed Billy Fleish, was beginning to wear away. So much, indeed, had opinion already changed, that Mrs. Binkin was horrified by hearing the people say that Tom Conway should be hunted for and tried. Mr. Brown, meanwhile, questioned everybody. From Josh and Judy he found that Tom had ridden away in the direction of Mr. Fleish's ranch. “ So it stan's to reason,” Judy added, “ that Marse Tom couldn't 'a' killed Mr. Billy Fleish in the lane.” From 'Reely he gathered that Tom had come to the house from Mrs. Gollyhaw's, had asked for Billy, and that about two hours after Billy had come in, had taken a drink, and had gone out again, saying he was going to Mrs. Gollyhaw's. From his own knowledge Mr. Brown asserted that Billy had not come to the Gollyhaws', and that Tom could not have killed him up to that time, and so prevented his appearing, for in that case Mr. Forbes and Milly would have seen the body in the lane on

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

their way home. Old Mrs. Fleish could not be made to speak. Mrs. Binkin he questioned closely, but could only persuade her to admit that she had promised to care for Milly until Tom came back. And so the case stood. The Fleishes were furious, and 'Reely asserted far and near that the Fleishes "worn't to be killed like dogs, an' Mike would pay the Conways out." And Mike, the eldest son, who had been hastily summoned, came "to wait for the Conway boys," he said, with quiet malignance.

Meanwhile Forbes went unnoticed. No one observed how pale and restless he grew; how that he had lost all his self-absorbed repose; none observed save Milly and Mrs. Binkin, and Milly attributed it to another cause. "He suspects Tom of the murder," she thought, "and so avoids the house and me," and her heart grew heavy.

Up to the time of "Mrs. Gollyhaw's candy-stew" they had been good friends; since then, since his avoidance of her, a knowledge had come to her that made her life a burden. She found that she loved Forbes, loved him now, when every moment she was losing faith in him! For this man did not trust his friend, so how could she trust him? And she hated herself for caring for a man who could suspect Tom. She saw all his uneasiness, all his restlessness, and put it down to his horror of what had happened. He had almost ceased coming to the house, and when he did come, it was across the fields, and not through the lane. She observed all this, and

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

also that he avoided Mrs. Binkin, that he seemed weary and sick; and, looking through his eyes, as her love enabled her to do, the crime, passed over so quietly by the town, grew more horrible to her; but her faith in Tom did not falter. She grew whiter and stiller, as the days went on—days of ceaseless watching from her high windows until her eyes would ache with the glare of light, or riding fast and far across the plains if perchance she might meet her brother.

And each time she met Forbes she would reassert her faith and belief, looking at him with her dark eyes that had grown bigger and pitifully sad in the long, uncertain weeks that had passed since the fatal candy-stew.

"Tom did not do it, Mr. Forbes," she would say, "and I am sure that some day the true murderer will be found; Tom would not have hidden, for he is not a coward."

And Forbes, turning away with an irresistible shudder, she would put it down to his conviction of Tom's guilt.

"It seems more awful to him than to us," she said more than once to Mrs. Binkin, and the decided answer, "That is true," would confirm her in her belief of Forbes's sensitiveness and of his faithlessness to Tom. But, outside, Milly was rather envied by the young women of the town as being the centre of this sensation, and the heroine of this mystery; for everybody knew that out of his love for her came Billy Fleish's death. He had been warned to let Milly alone;

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

his own father had said, "Shootin' was too good for a Fleish that cared for a Conway."

'Reely repeated this many times, and with it Billy's threat that "somebody would be missin'" if Milly did not go to the Gollyhaws' with him—repeated both these speeches that had been so strangely verified, for Billy had not been shot, but stabbed, and *two* were missing when the morning came! Pecan revelled in this marvellous fulfilment of the forecasting.

Meanwhile Mrs. Binkin's contempt for Forbes grew as she saw that his terror increased. Yet, when she stopped to think of it, he had every reason to be uneasy. His life would be worthless if the Fleishes knew the truth, and, further, if he did not love Milly she had put a hard condition on him. Any deeper misery for Forbes she did not realize, for she had lived long on the border, where life goes almost for nothing. She could not understand the awful load of guilt that he felt. She could not know the sickening horror he had for the white moonlight, nor for the sound of the wind; she could not know of the dull hatred for herself, for Milly, for all his half-civilized surroundings that was growing up hour by hour in his heart. Her only thought was that he feared the Fleishes, that he feared betrayal by her; of the despair that filled his days and nights, that would have made hanging almost a boon, of this she had no conception; she had only a hard contempt for what she supposed was cowardice.

Moral codes differ, and in Pecan fear was the

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

blackest sin. So long as a man owned his misdeeds without flinching, just so long the people made excuses for him, but no longer, and this was one reason for the half-hearted sympathy accorded the Fleishes. The Fleishes had never been what Pecan called "fair an' squar'," while the Conways had been daring in their wrong-doing; and if Tom Conway had ridden into Pecan and had declared himself Billy Fleish's murderer, and, further, that he had been waiting for the chance because he believed that the unknown shots that had killed his father and brother had been fired by the Fleishes, the sympathy and moral support of the whole town would have gone with him; but failing to do this, Pecan began to fear that her favorite son had "sneaked."

Dave Brown did not believe this, and said, over and over again, that if the story ever came to light it would be the strangest story that Pecan had ever heard. And Pecan listened to him, and was willing to come to no conclusion, but to abide in this mystery that grew deeper and more exciting, while Mike Fleish with his brother and father awaited the return of the Conway boys.

At last on one hot June day there rode into Pecan a man who had been on the same drive with the Conways, and who brought the news that the brothers were in San Antonio, that they had heard of the murder, that they were hunting for Tom, but that, whether they found him or not, they would come down in a few days ready for anything! The town was in a stir, the talk

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

buzzed about from house to house, growing as it went, and the excitement reached a height never known before. One or the other faction must be "killed off," or must surrender. And as the truth came home to Forbes he was terrified. He could avert this horrible bloodshed. Yes, and Mrs. Binkin could avert it. She, who loved the Conways, who despised him, and who would not heed his life if the test was put upon her. And the higher motive, that momentarily had been his, was buried beyond resurrection under the fear of her betrayal.

"This is horrible," he said to Dave Brown—"horrible that these men should kill each other for nothing."

"It's pretty bad," Dave admitted, and he looked at Forbes's white face curiously.

"They should be bound over to keep the peace," Forbes went on, his excitement increasing.

Dave shook his head.

"If I'd tell that on you, Mr. Forbes," he said, "the boys would mob you, let alone what else they'd think;" then looking away across the plain, he added, "the only way is to find the murderer, an' let 'em fight it out in peace."

But Forbes's unusual proposition did leak out, and the town repudiated the suggestion with scorn. "A fair fight's a fair fight," they said, "an' it was better to hev the thing done an' over with."

Forbes was silenced, Milly sickened with dread,

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

and Mrs. Binkin was furious. "It was foolishness to say that the Fleishes would have to be fair," she declared, "for they did not know what truth or honor meant, and would shoot the Conways any mean chance they got."

To this declaration the town listened, and was forced into agreement; then they gathered in consultation on the subject, while Mrs. Binkin went home in despair. She shut herself in her room to think, and, thinking, she unfolded Forbes's clothes and looked at them. The crisis that she had so persistently hoped that Tom would be there to avert was close upon her, and something must be done. Was she to sacrifice the Conway boys for this poor Forbes? Never! A decision hastily shaped itself; and, rapidly folding the clothes and putting them once more in the trunk, she rose trembling from her chair. The school term was over; she would warn Forbes, give him two days to escape, and then denounce him. This would save Milly, and prevent further bloodshed between the Conways and Fleishes. What mattered it what they did to her for helping the murderer to escape. She was weary of life anyhow, and Milly would care for little Mary. Hurriedly she put on her old sun-bonnet, and, unlocking the door, stepped into the hall; and there, as if come to do her bidding, there, framed in the open front door, stood Forbes, hat in hand, pale and trembling. She stopped, drawing a short breath; then he came one step in the door.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

"I have come to say good-bye, Mrs. Binkin," he faltered.

"Good-bye?" she repeated, moving slowly towards him, "good-bye? This is sudden."

"Yes," withdrawing the hand she would not take, "it is sudden, but it cannot be helped."

"Are you sure? Well, we'll walk a little piece an' talk about it," and she preceded him from the house with a brave front, although her heart throbbed with fear of his next words. Swiftly she walked, and Forbes followed her, with a red flush staining his face. How he hated this woman!

She kept well ahead of him until she reached the gate; there she waited for him, and, once outside, began.

"A person's always safe on the prairie," she said, "for nobody can hide an' listen."

"Yes," Forbes answered, sullenly, "but I have nothing to say except good-bye."

"An' 'God bless you,'" she answered, scoffingly; then more sharply, "but I have something to say. How about Milly Conway?"

"One hour ago I asked her to marry me."

"Well?"

"She refused."

"For once the Lord has been merciful!" Mrs. Binkin cried, fervently, and paused to look in the young man's face that had grown so thin and old in the past few weeks. "For once," she repeated, forgetting, in her gladness for Milly's deliverance, as she now felt it to be, that Forbes,

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

having kept his word, left her powerless to tell his story, and so to stop the feud between the Conways and the Fleishes. For this moment she was glad, and asked, almost eagerly, "An' when are you goin'!"

"To-morrow morning," he answered, promptly, with a little anger in his voice, for he did not understand this joy over his refusal; and, thankful as he was for his freedom, he was nettled, and Mrs. Binkins saw it.

"An' you're mad," she said, with a smile, as she walked on; "you thought I wanted Milly to marry you."

"It surely seemed so," Forbes retorted.

"So it did; an' before I knew you I did want Milly to say 'Yes,' but since you murdered Billy Fleish—"

Forbes grasped her arm. "For God's sake, hush!" he whispered, turning deadly pale.

Mrs. Binkin laughed. "That's just it," she went on, quietly. "Since that night, since I've found you such a coward, so 'fraid of what you've done, I haven't any use for you." Forbes listened in dumb amazement. Was this woman human? "There's many a good man has killed another," she went on, pushing her long bonnet back a little, "sometimes by accident, sometimes for madness, sometimes because they ought to die; but whatever a man has done, whether he has killed a dog or a Mexican, or whether he has killed the President, let him stand up to it; but you," turning the focus of

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

her long bonnet full upon Forbes, "I wouldn't trust you ; I believe you'd commit a cold blooded murder." The young man shrank back, while his teeth chattered as one in a death chill.

"You have no right—" he began, tremulously, but Mrs. Binkin interrupted him.

"Yes, I have the right, because I have the power ; 'might makes right,' you know, especially in the hands of a woman, and I want you to understand a few things before I give you your clothes. I want you to understand that I despise you, an' I want you to understand that before you leave this town you've got to tell why you're goin'."

"Impossible !" the young man cried.

"There you are again," and this time Mrs. Binkin's voice had grown angry, "scared to death ! I mean only for you to tell the folks that you can't live in the same town with Milly"—a great scorn coming into her voice—"an' that she will not have you ; you must tell that."

"I cannot !"

"Then you'd better leave Pecan this minute"—calmly—"for I'll walk right straight on to Dave Brown's office, an' be glad to do it, for that will save any fight between the Conways and Fleishes. I don't often break my word, but you are not worth keeping faith with ; you've asked Milly, an' that was all the bargain, but you've got to do this, too."

"My God !" And she heard him grind his teeth.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

"You'd like to kill me, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Binkin laughed. "I like you better for that," she said. "That's honest, an' I'm as sorry as you are that my time has not come yet. Meanwhile you go to old Mrs. Brown's to say good-bye, an' let her know the reason you're goin'; and that 'll do, for you know"—smiling—"she'll be so glad to tell it to bother Mrs. Gollyhaw, who tries to make people think you like Lorena-Dora. I'm goin' to the Fleishes', an' after that I'll stop at Mrs. Brown's to hear the news of you; then I'll go to see Milly an' hear the truth"—with a meaning pause—"an' if all has gone to suit me, I'll bring the clothes to-night; do you know how many pieces there were?"

Forbes started. She could cheat him, after all!

"Collar, and cuffs, and shirt," pausing doubtfully.

"Yes," Mrs. Binkin answered, understanding fully his tone and manner, "that's right; but I'll be honest with you: there's a handkerchief, too, with your full name on it, an' all the marks where you wiped your hands."

Perhaps it was the heat of the sun; perhaps it was the slow torture he had been put through; perhaps it was the horrid picture her cool words brought up; but he reeled and would have fallen but for her strong arm. He leaned against her for a moment, until the world once more stood

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

still ; then he walked to a tree near by and rested against its trunk.

"I'm sorry for you," she said, abruptly, "an' when you get to Mrs. Brown's you ask for a glass of wine ; she'll be proud to show she's got it." She paused for a moment, looking at the young man who leaned against the tree with the hopeless despair of his heart fully revealed on his face. "I'm sorry for you," she repeated, "but I'll tell you that you've got luck with you yet. You just saved yourself this mornin'. I was on my way to tell you to run. I was goin' to give you two days, an' then I was goin' to tell the truth about Billy Fleish, an' stop this row. Now I'll have to stop it some other way."

At that moment Forbes felt inclined to go to Dave Brown himself, but the next words cheered him in some undefined way.

"I'll have to find some other way," the woman repeated, "for your luck's with you yet." Then she turned away. "I'll bring your things over to-night—you'll find them under the clean clothes in the basket—an' remember that I've saved your life, young man, for if I'd told Tom Conway what I began to think a month ago, that you intended to slight his sister, your funeral would have been forgotten by now. Good-bye." And she left him.

Straight and tall in her always limp black frock and long black bonnet, a moving line in the white glare of sunlight, unlovely, angular, with a long, plodding stride like a man, she moved away,

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

and Forbes watched her with a great hatred in his heart.

There was no hesitation in Mrs. Binkin's walk nor in her manner, but in her heart there were many fears and doubts. She could not now denounce Forbes, and how else was she to stop this bloodshed that was so imminent? If the worst came to the worst, she could tell Dave Brown her story, suppressing names, and meanwhile she held one weapon that could be tried against the Fleishes. In the past there had been transactions between her husband and the Fleishes that would even now, if proved, put them in the penitentiary. She had no proofs, but she need not tell the Fleishes that. And she stood still in the hot sun to think. Yes, she would try these threats; maybe she could drive them away from the town, but she must be very careful, for if this failed she had only the hope that her unsupported word would clear Tom Conway of the murder, for she could not compromise Forbes. She did not know what the law could do to her for suppressing the name of the criminal, but she could bear that. She laughed a little. What was it that she could not bear? Straight on she walked, up the front path and into the Fleishes' house without question or permission, into the front room where she heard voices. They were all there, and startled glances passed between them as she stalked in. She saw it all, and guessed rightly that she had caught them plotting. She took off her bonnet, giving one swift glance to right and

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

left, then stopped in front of the father. No greetings passed between them; her attack was made without warning.

"You an' Mike and Bob are waitin' for the Conways," she began, "but I've got something to say that 'll change things." She paused to catch her breath, and in the pause Mrs. Fleish crept round behind her husband's chair and leaned there, watching Mrs. Binkin in a scared, fascinated way. "The murder of Billy Fleish is not the only crime that's been done in Pecan that I know of," she went on, with a glance round the startled circle. "Jim Conway, the father, was shot by an unknown hand," pointing her bony finger in the old man's face, "an' Jack Conway, his son, was shot by an unknown hand—so people say, but *I* know—yes, an' can prove it."

"An' why didn't you tell that long ago," 'Reely struck in, scornfully, "when you love the Conways so much an' hates the Fleishes?"

"Yes, I do hate the Fleishes," turning savagely on the girl, "an' I didn't keep it to save *them*. My little Mary"—her voice softened—"had been very near to death, but she had come back to me, and it was not in my heart to take another woman's child from her," and she looked at the mother, whose frightened eyes grew wet with tears; "but I can go to Dave Brown now, an' you, old Bill, an' Mike will be locked up before night."

"Not so sure," Mike answered, carelessly, even though his face grew deadly white.

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

Mrs. Binkin, standing with her arms akimbo, laughed disagreeably. "I'll make you sure," she retorted—"I'll make you sure, Mike Fleish. Who broke into Dave Brown's shop?"

The young man started, but he answered, boldly, "Your husband."

"That's true!" she flashed back, "and that's why I've got the whole thing in my hands. Joe Binkin's dead now, but Mike Fleish ain't, and there's a penitentiary in Texas."

The young man walked to the window and back, uneasily. "And you'd tell?" he asked, stopping in front of her.

"Yes, and give Dave my house and lot for Joe's part of the stealin'. I tell you my turn has come now," fixing her eyes on the father, "and I won't stop at anything that 'll hurt you Fleishes. *You* know how I hate you!" striking lightly the old man's shoulder. "You kidnapped me, a helpless orphan, away from life and love long ago, and gave me helpless into the devil's own keeping—you know how I hate you!"

He raised his head and looked at her. "Yes," he said, slowly, "I know." Then a silence fell.

No word had been said of compromise, no suggestion had been made as to the Fleishes retiring, and Mrs. Binkin had used almost every threat at her command. She stood quite still in the middle of the room with her bonnet in her hand, her long arms hanging straight down at her sides, and her gloomy, pondering eyes fixed on the old man. Mike leaned against the side of the win-

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

dow, looking out across the shadowless prairie ; 'Reely sat with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands ; Bob whittled a stick, looking down on the floor ; while the mother, leaning on the back of her husband's chair, watched Mrs. Binkin. The flies buzzed about with a ceaseless hum, the sun came with hot, unshaded glare through the front windows, the wind went rattling by, and far, very far, came the sound of the incoming train. The dull sounds wandered about Mrs. Binkin as she stood in the midst of her enemies, sounds that held no meaning for her ; yet she listened a moment, while a feeling of desperation gathered in her heart, for now she must say her last words.

"Only one more thing I've got to say," she began, slowly, lifting her head with an air of determination, "then I'm going to Dave Brown"—an uneasy stir went through her audience, and all eyes were bent on her—"an' that one thing is, that Tom Conway didn't kill Billy Fleish." Her voice was decided, and her stern look falling by chance on the mother, she stopped with half-parted lips, for the woman's face had changed so strangely—what ailed her ? But only for a moment Mrs. Binkin paused ; then she went on, while she watched closely the terrified face before her, "For I know who—" But that was all. There was a heart-rending cry and a heavy fall, then cries and exclamations as Mrs. Fleish's children gathered round where she lay.

"She's fainted," 'Reely said ; "take her to the

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

bed." But the father did not go with them, and Mrs. Binkin did not move. The certainty had come to her that this woman knew more about the story even than she did.

Presently Mike came back. "Mar's all right," he said; then looking Mrs. Binkin full in the face, he added, sullenly, "We'll not wait for the Conways, Mrs. Binkin; we'll all go to-night, 'cept Mar and 'Reely."

Mrs. Binkin's eyes grew keener. "So she's told you, has she?" she hazarded.

Mike started a little. "She's sick, an' off her head," he answered; "she can't go."

"An' if she stays she'll tell all she knows," Mrs. Binkin struck in, mercilessly, watching closely the face before her, while a startled look swept over it. "An' I'm going to Dave Brown," she continued, "an' tell him all I know; there's too many crimes on you to stand you any longer."

Mike grasped her arm, and the old man started up. "We're goin'!" they cried.

Mrs. Binkin laughed. "I know that," she said; "I knew you'd have to go when I got ready, but I'm thinking if I ought to leave you loose in Texas."

The men before her looked at each other in despair. "We'll promise anything," Mike said; then his lips were so dry and tremulous that he stopped for a moment, only going on by a great effort, "I'll swear, Mrs. Binkin, I'll swear we'll never touch a Conway; I'll swear we'll never come back to Pecan; I'll swear we'll sell every

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

blessed thing we're got in Pecan, or near it ; I'll swear it."

Mrs. Binkin looked at him a moment in silence, her eyes shining and dilating with the triumph of this victory that had been gained almost by chance.

"Before God?" she said, holding up her hand, "before God?"

"Before God!" Mike answered, holding up his hand in his turn ; then the tremulous hand of the old man was lifted also. For a moment they stood looking in each other's eyes, then the woman clasped her hands above her head, and her face was lifted.

"At last !" she whispered—"at last my enemies are under my feet ; at last I have driven them from the land they cursed ; at last their sins have found them out !" Then she turned swiftly and left the room and house.

The next morning Pecan felt as if swept from its bearings, and all work stopped that things might be properly realized and discussed. For through the early morning blow after blow fell in quick succession upon the astonished senses of the people. First, the astounding news that the Fleishes had gone, had "cleared out bag and baggage" on the midnight train, the women only being left because Mrs. Fleish had had a stroke of paralysis. Then, that Mr. Forbes had given up the school and had left on the early morning train, telling old Mrs. Brown that it was because Milly Conway would not marry him ; and last,

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

as if to crown the thrilling budget, Dave Brown announced openly that he had proof that Tom Conway did not murder Billy Fleish !

Pecan listened, fumed, boiled up and over ; then realizing that with the departure of the Fleishes the feud that had been the life of the town was ended, it collapsed ; the life and reason of being seemed suddenly to have gone out of everything, and Pecan turned in wrath and disappointment, and poured its contempt on the name of Fleish.

Three years passed that brought many changes to Pecan. Milly Conway, marrying a clergyman, went away to the Eastern States, after which her brothers scattered. The Binkin girls also married, one of them becoming Mrs. Perkins. After this 'Reely Fleish eloped with an unsuspected stranger, and Mrs. Binkin sent for Bob Fleish to come and take his forsaken mother away.

It was pitiful when the poor creature wept and wailed, and pleaded to be left in her old home. In these three years her life had been free from fears and curses, and she dreaded going back to the old troubled existence. She clung to Mrs. Binkin who was with her, and who in her victory had been merciful to this poor wreck. "Keep me," she pleaded ; "I'm so tired !" Mrs. Binkin's face worked strangely.

"Keep me," the feeble voice went on, "the boys will pay you, and I'll not trouble you long. Oh, Milly Withers, I'm so tired !" The poor imbecile had gone back to the names of her youth, and the sound made the woman who stood by

MRS. GOLLYHAW'S CANDY-STEW

her tremble a little. Milly Withers would have been merciful. There was a moment's pause while the poor creature moaned with her face hidden on Mrs. Binkin's shoulder, and Bob stood watching them curiously. Suddenly the moans ceased, and the sick woman raised her head with a quivering flush on her wasted face, for she felt Mrs. Binkin's arm steal about her.

"I'll keep you," the deep voice said, and the quiet words that told of a hard-won victory, that healed the hurt of all the years, seemed to echo and re-echo all about them. "I'll keep you," and peace came into her life at last.

And at Mrs. Fleish's death a strange story was told to Dave Brown, with only Mrs. Binkin for witness, a story that could not be proved, for "Jenkins's Washout" had been filled in for a railroad cutting. But through all these chances and changes Mrs. Gollyhaw's ambition was gratified, for Mrs. Gollyhaw's candy-stew remained one of the most important epochs of Pecan, since it was on that night that Tom Conway disappeared and a lasting mystery was given into the hands of the town.

BALDY

BALDY

BEFORE the war, before Miss Maria left her home as a refugee, Baldy was one of the delights of Kingshaven. He was very fat and sleek and slow, and was nicknamed "Baldy" because of the absence of hair on his tail. This horse was the property of Miss Maria Cathcart, and from having been the pride of her life, he had, in consequence of this vexatious affliction, become a source of the deepest mortification.

His real name was "Prince"; then, because of his slowness, the young people dubbed him "Jog," for they declared that though Miss Maria thought he was going, because she saw Daddy Jack holding the reins and because she saw the horse moving, Prince was in reality only quietly jumping up and down in the same place.

Miss Maria was indignant, and old Jack was insulted, and looked the other way whenever he drove past the houses or carriages of these revilers. But Jog the horse was called until the hair began to drop out of his tail; then Baldy became his universal appellation.

BALDY

This horse was one of the loves of old Jack's life, so to him the misfortune that was overtaking Baldy's tail was a deep grief, and he tried every known and many unknown remedies on the offending member. To make one infallible salve he even went so far as to go to the old church-yard alone at twelve o'clock on a Friday night in the dark of the moon to gather "rabbit tobacco," which was a chief ingredient. But nothing seemed to stop the awful devastation, and at last Baldy became such a mirth-provoking spectacle that Miss Maria felt that he must be replaced. But how was she to tell Jack this?

Her nephew, who was looking for a safe horse for her, roared with laughter at the thought of her hesitation.

"Why, what can Jack say or do, Aunt Maria?"

"Of course *nothing*," Miss Maria answered. "But it will be a dreadful blow to him, Charles, a *dreadful* blow!"

"I'll call him and tell him at once," Mr. St. Clair said.

"No, oh no!" and Miss Maria raised both hands and shook her head. "Don't tell him suddenly. Poor Jack! he still hopes to cure the affliction."

After Mr. St. Clair had gone, Miss Maria began walking up and down her long, deep piazza, with her hands clasped behind her. It would have been better, perhaps, to have let Charles tell Jack, she thought; even trusted servants like Jack

BALDY

could sometimes be very disagreeable, and Jack *was* obstinate, very obstinate indeed. Her cousin Polly Bullen said that she spoiled her servants. The idea of Polly Bullen saying such a thing, Polly, whose negroes were notoriously lazy and pampered, as Tremelstoune negroes had always been! No, on reflection she was glad that she had not allowed Charles to tell the news to Jack; that would have looked as if what her cousin Polly Bullen said was true; she would tell Jack herself; she would call him in at once.

She walked briskly through the house to the back piazza, but she paused there. Under the big live-oak tree that shaded the whole stable-yard she saw Baldy tied, and behind him stood old Jack, platting carefully the few hairs that remained of his tail. The old man was completely absorbed in his task; his big fingers moved as carefully as if handling spun glass, and at each movement of the horse, if it were only a twitching of the skin, he paused, so fearful was he lest any sudden motion should loosen even one hair! When all was done, Jack stood off with his head a little on one side, and looked at the spindling braid contemplatively. Was it less than yesterday? He raised it once more and looked at the ends; again he let it go out of his hands slowly, almost reverently. Would it be better to leave it hanging, he pondered, or should he wrap it up again?

A fly buzzed by. Jack started; Baldy might use it on flies! Might try to *switch* flies with it,

BALDY

and *all* might go! The thought made him almost reckless in his movements as he began rapidly to fold up the thin queue and to wrap it in a bandage of red flannel. When it was safe he stood looking at it with an "I've-done-my-best" air, that was little short of tragic.

Miss Maria turned away in silence, and went back to the front piazza.

It was a pleasant day, with the wind rippling the broad expanse of water in front, and touching into motion the waves of silver hair on Miss Maria's peaceful brow, and the tiny frills of white muslin that, lying one upon another, formed a soft, close border around her face. She looked out at the water, then down on the garden, where under the hot sun the flowers were giving out sweet odors. It was indeed a pleasant day, and one that she could have enjoyed thoroughly and peacefully, save for the annoyance caused by Jack and that poor horse's tail. It was ridiculous the feeling Jack had, perfectly ridiculous, and she could not stand it any longer. The horse looked too droll for anything; of course people would laugh—they could not help it; that barrel body on four legs, with no tail to balance the head, was ludicrous and undignified, and she could not be made the laughing-stock of the town. She had not betrayed that she minded it, but she did, and this very afternoon while out driving she would tell Jack that it was for the last time. Yes, she would tell him this very afternoon; it would be a better time than now,

BALDY

when he was so intent on the very thing in question.

When the hour for driving came, she gave the order for the carriage more sternly than usual, and when she said to Kizzy, "Take off my cap, and bring my bonnet and mantilla," there was such determination in both voice and eye that Kizzy wondered a little, and moved more quickly than usual.

Old Jack did not look happy when he drove round to the front door, for even though Baldy's tail was streaming in the wind, it made no show at all, and gave no sign of the care bestowed on it.

"Wey you gwine, missis?" he asked, when, having shut Miss Maria into the little carriage, he had taken his own seat. "Muss I drike roun' Pigeon P'int, m'am?"

"No," Miss Maria answered, firmly; "drive round the bay and out on the shell road."

There was a moment's pause, and as the front windows of the carriage were open, Miss Maria, who was on the same level with Jack, could see that he had not gathered up the reins.

"Round the bay and out on the shell road, Jack, to the Cottage," she repeated. "Don't you hear me?"

"Yes, missis."

"Well?"

"Miss 'Ria, if we go roun' de bay, m'am," Jack answered, slowly, "enty you know say we gwine pass Mass John house wey awl dem chillun gwine laugh at we; en we gwine pass Mass George

BALDY

Bullen house, en awl dem is gwine laugh at we ; en awl dem turrer house, same fashi'n ; en I know say unner ain't gwine like *dat*."

"Jack, your business is to *obey*!" Miss Maria commanded. "I am *shocked* that you should speak in this way ! Drive on !"

Slowly, and with protest in every movement, Jack gathered up the reins ; then drawing his infinite lips into a knot, he made a sound that caused Baldy to move off.

Miss Maria sat very erect in the carriage, with the expression of determination which had quickened Kizzy's steps grown strong on her face. Jack had now given her a very good opportunity for telling him of her intentions with regard to the horse. She could scold him for speaking to her in such a disrespectful way, and show him how his bad behavior was the cause of her ordering another animal. A *very* good opportunity. And alone as she was, Miss Maria shook her head, and reared it back to emphasize her thoughts. For the present moment, however, she was herself too deeply interested in watching the effect of her own progress through the town to begin her sermon ; there would be a plenty of time for that once they were beyond the limits.

First they would pass the St. Clairs', her sister's family ; yes, there they were, and of course laughing ! A faint color came on her faded cheeks, and a light that was not faint came into her bright blue eyes. She sat very straight indeed, but no one got the benefit of her dignity, be-

BALDY

cause it was a close little square carriage with glasses only over the doors and in front between her and the coachman, and though they were now all open, an outsider could have no view of any one on the back seat. Miss Maria, however, had a full view of Jack's profile, for he turned his head away from the houses, and looked out across the river. His expression was extremely sullen, and Miss Maria began to feel provoked with him. It was high time she got a new horse, if only to teach Jack a lesson ; he really behaved as if *he* owned the horse !

Now they were passing George Bullen's house ; yes, here again she saw all the young people laughing ! And even if she had gone round Pigeon Point she would have had to pass her cousin Polly Bullen's, and all Cicely Selwyn's children would have been *there* laughing. Really, the manners of the rising generation needed mending ; *nothing* was safe from their ridicule. A misfortune such as had befallen her horse ought not to make her a laughing-stock ; they should remember that it *was* a misfortune.

Yes, and the William Caryls were just getting into *their* carriage, and *they* were smiling ; it was intolerable—really intolerable ! Of course if she had gone by Pigeon Point she would have escaped much of this, but she could not have respected herself.

They would soon be through the town now, and then by to-morrow afternoon she would have a new horse. She would almost have con-

BALDY

sented to a prancing steed, if by such a risk she could have changed the laughter of her friends and relatives into admiration, tintured with a little mild envy !

The James St. Clairs' was the last house on the bay, and soon they would have passed it. They tried not to show themselves, but she knew they were peeping.

Now it was all done with ; and how sweet the air was, and the great river looked so blue, and the sunlight came so red from the low western sky. Kingshaven was surely blessed—blessed in every way. So secluded, so religious, so cultivated and educated, so different from the outside world with its dreadful vulgar progress and new inventions. Richard Denny always said that after a visit to Kingshaven, he regretted the duty that kept him away from it. Yes, the quiet and the seclusion were the pleasantest things ; even the steamboat twice a week was more than was desirable ; it was bringing occasional excursions of very common people—very *rough* people. For one, she preferred the old days when the gentlemen used their own row-boats to go to Williamstown and Everglade ; or their own wagons and carriages for travelling inland.

The thought of this inland travel brought her mind back to Baldy. They were quite out of the town now, with the shining water on one side and groves of oaks or reaches of pine on the other ; the warm air was full of the smell of pines, with sometimes quite strong whiffs from the salt

BALDY

mud, which Miss Maria liked just as well, having grown up to it. Jack was looking straight ahead now, so that she could not see his face ; but there was a droop to his high hat and a curve to his blue-coated shoulders that made Miss Maria more than suspect that he was asleep. "How careless !" she said, aloud, glad of an opening for her projected sermon, which was to end with the solemn announcement of Baldy's approaching deposition. "Suppose something should frighten the horse? Jack!"—raising her voice—"Jack, is it *possible* that you are *asleep*? Asleep, and I, your *mistress*, alone in this carriage, and entirely unprotected? I am *astonished* at you—at a man of *your* age being so reckless! Really, Jack—really, I am *shocked*!"

"No, m'am—no, missis, I ain't 'sleep, m'am," Jack protested; his head was well up now, and his shoulders straightened. "No, m'am; I 'clay I 'ain't been 'sleep; I des been steddin'—yes, m'am."

"You *were* asleep, Jack," Miss Maria pursued, relentlessly. "You were almost nodding—yes, actually *nodding*! and at *any* moment the horse might have run away! Because he has no *tail*, that is no reason why he should be trusted *implicitly*; he still has four legs, and I dare say can run very briskly—*very* briskly, indeed. And I am surprised, Jack, that a person with such Christian teaching as you have had should attempt such bold deceit; I am *shocked*! And the harness, Jack, looks quite dingy. I am sure that

BALDY

you have not paid it the slightest attention for a long time ; it needs a good rubbing—a most thorough cleaning ; I am ashamed of it. It is much worse than the horse's tail, for that we cannot help, while the harness shows great carelessness and neglect. And I observed this morning that the stable-yard had not been raked or swept in some time ; and the cellar, too, needs cleaning out. Really, you seem to be neglecting everything, and in addition trying to deceive me, as you did just now."

"Miss 'Ria, I 'clay, Miss 'Ria, I 'ain't been 'sleep," Jack reiterated ; "no, m'am, I 'ain't ; en I rub de hahness good dis berry day—yes, m'am, dis *berry* day. En fuh de ya'd, dem boy Mingo en Moses, is fuh *dem* to rake *awl* de ya'd ; I too ole fuh rake ya'd ; en who *ebber* yeddy say coachman rake ya'd ? None o' *my* ole Mawsa fambly 'ain't say nuttin like *dat*—no, m'am. Miss 'Ria, you know say yo' Pah 'ain't *nebber* meck no coachman rake ya'd."

"It is for *you* to make Moses and Mingo do their work," Miss Maria went on, sternly. "You have only *one* horse to take care of, and *two* boys to help you, and it is *shocking* that things are not in better order. Your old master would be surprised to see your carelessness, Jack, for he told me that in giving you to be my coachman he was giving me a fine boy and a faithful servant. Forty years ago that was, Jack—think of it, *forty years ago*—and then see how horrid that harness looks ! Why, the overseer's harness would look

BALDY

as well. Forty years ago, Jack, my father gave you to be my coachman, and all that time you have been cared for, and your first wife and children, and now Kizzy and this other baby—*think* of it !”

“Yes, m’am, en I is awl w’at my Mawsa say I is—yes, m’am ; en fuh de ya’d en dem boy, dey ’mos’ meck me loss awl my ’ligion. I lick um, en you stop me, ’kase you say I gwine hot um, en you know say if nigger ain’t lick, nigger ain’t no ’count ; en I cahn’ meck dem boy wuck, cep-pen I lick um.”

“You can order them, Jack, and see that they do not stop ; and besides, you do not whip them, you *beat* them, and I cannot have it. But, besides the yards, there is the cellar.”

“En w’at ail de cellar, Miss ’Ria ?”

“Why, it’s dirty, *very* dirty. I was very much ashamed yesterday when your Mass John went in to see what I needed from the plantation ; it looked horrid. Now *that* is your work, and not the boys’, and you *must* see to it.”

“Yes, m’am ; you ’ain’t say nuttin’ befo’ now ’bout de cellar, en I ’ain’t know say ’e been dutty.”

A silence ensued, while Baldy jogged along the white road, and Jack flapped the reins on his back by way of encouragement. There was no other ground for fault-finding that Miss Maria could think of, and she felt somewhat at a loss, seeing that she had not yet driven Jack into making an excuse of Baldy’s tail, as she wished to do in order

BALDY

to break the dreadful news to him with a plain reason behind it.

Thimp, thump ; thamp, thump, Baldy pounded along, and old Jack, looking straight ahead, moved his lips as if speaking to himself. Presently he made a little grunting sound, and immediately Miss Maria began again.

"You need not grumble, Jack," she said, at a venture, and yet decidedly ; "you *are* neglecting your work, neglecting it *shamefully*. Now *why* is this? You have no more to do than usual ; *why* should you not do it properly?"

"I t'ink say I been doin' prop'ly, Miss 'Ria ; t'ings looks des de same like dey always looks to me ; en I rub de hahness dis *berry* day—yes, m'am."

"And what else have you done to-day?" Miss Maria pursued. "Now tell me exactly what has been your day's work."

"Well, m'am, I git up dis mawnin'," Jack began, literally, "en fus t'ing I do I milk de cow fuh Sis Lucy, 'kase she han' hot she ; den I 'tend to de horse, en eat me breakfuss ; den I rake in de gahden, en trim de rose - bush what is runnin' roun' de muttle-bush—"

"The myrtle - bush?" Miss Maria interrupted. "I don't remember any rose that touches the myrtle-bush."

"Yes, m'am, dat yaller - white rose is forebber gittin' to de muttle-bush—yes, m'am ; den I rake de gahden wey I trim de rose-bush, en teck de trash 'way ; den I gone to de stable 'gen, to de horse—"

BALDY

"What for?" Miss Maria struck in, quickly.

"Fuh gie um some water, Miss 'Ria," was answered, disarmingly; "co'se horse muss drink—yes, m'am; den I gone to de kitchen fuh light me pipe, en Sis Lucy say please fuh shell de pease, 'kase she han' hot she 'gen; den Kizzy git bex, en say if I gwine wuck, I muss wuck fuh she; den I come 'way, 'kase I know say if I wuck fuh Kizzy one time, I ain't *nebber* gwine git done, en I gone to de stable 'gen—"

"What for?" Miss Maria demanded, with increased eagerness.

"To git 'way from Kizzy, m'am," Jack returned, with unmistakable earnestness. "Miss 'Ria, you ain't know dat nigger like I know um; heaper time I sorry say I married Kizzy, 'kase Kizzy bodder me to de't'—yes, m'am. Miss' Ria, Kizzy is a tarry-fyin' gal, en I gone to de stable kase I know say Kizzy ain't gwine come dey, 'kase I done tell um say if 'e come to de stable I gwine teck dat carriage whip en lick um, so 'e 'fraid."

"And what did you do in the stable?"

"Dat is de time I rub de hahness, m'am."

"And after that?"

Jack paused a moment; as long as he had served his mistress he had never seen her in this inquisitorial mood, and it puzzled him; besides, his dignity was hurt that at his time of life he should be taken to task like a boy, and into his next answer there crept a note of impatience.

"Den I gone to me dinner, Miss 'Ria—please Gawd, I hab to eat!"

BALDY

"Of course," Miss Maria assented; "and you know quite well, Jack, that I never grudge my servants anything that they need—I am a good mistress, Jack, and you know it; but I must find how it is that you do not get time to keep things in good order. Now, what did you do after dinner?"

"I res' a minute, Miss 'Ria, tell I smoke me pipe; den I gone to see what Moses en Mingo is doin', m'am, en meck um clean de stable; den I gie de horse some mo' water; den I unwrop 'e tail—"

"Ah!" cried Miss Maria, with a long breath of relief, as at last she caught the excuse she had been pursuing. "*That* is it, Jack, that is the root of *everything*! At last you acknowledge it—the horse's tail. You spend *so* much time on the horse's tail, Jack, that *everything* in the yard and garden and cellar looks *wretchedly*, and I am continually mortified; and I tell you *plainly*, Jack, that I cannot put up with it any longer. Then this afternoon you were quite disrespectful about driving down the bay, and quite in a bad temper about it; it has really reached a point beyond my patience."

"Miss 'Ria," poor Jack cried, "I 'ain't plait dis horse tail but two time to-day—"

"I watched you myself, Jack, and saw you spend quite a half-hour on it; then you are sullen and disagreeable if people laugh—"

"Yes, m'am," Jack struck in, "it do hot my feelin's, Miss 'Ria, when de people laugh at we ;

BALDY

you Pah wouldn't like it, Miss 'Ria ; en you ain't to say like it, nurrer ; en I ain't usen to see *my* Mawsa fambly laugh at—no, m'am, I *ain't*."

"Of *course* not !" Miss Maria cried, with a ring of triumph in her voice—"of course not, and so I must get another horse."

To Miss Maria's excited mind the universe seemed to pause for a moment—even Baldy's stolid trot seemed "far away on alien shores," and the wind and the water had ceased to sound—one moment, then Jack laid the reins down on the dash-board and folded his hands. Miss Maria's eyes grew big with astonishment.

"Jack," she demanded, "*what* do you mean?"

"Miss 'Ria," was answered, solemnly, "I cahn' stan' it—no, m'am, I cahn' stan' it if you say dat 'gen. No, m'am, Miss 'Ria, if you say dat ting 'gen, I gwine git out dis carriage en walk home, en leff you right yer in de broad road. I cahn' stan' it, Miss 'Ria, fuh sell dis horse."

Miss Maria clasped her hands and looked about her as if the sky had fallen. To be left alone in the carriage—alone with a horse—so far from home ! She raised her eyes to the top of the vehicle. "Lord, I am oppressed !" she said, solemnly. There was silence for a moment ; then Jack, with mingled feelings of awe for Miss Maria's invocation and of satisfaction for having carried his point, took up the reins once more, and they proceeded on their way.

Reaching the usual end of the drive, they turned and drove back to the town in absolute

BALDY

silence, Miss Maria not speaking even when Jack chose to go home by secluded back streets. But she was angry, and her thoughts were busy. Something must be done to punish Jack; such behavior could not be overlooked—but what? If she told her brother John, or her brother-in-law, or her nephew Charles, it would be looked on as a joke, and there would be the laugh against her through the whole connection. That must not be—she must manage this thing herself. She thought about it a great deal that afternoon, and when her sister came in that evening to say that Charles had secured a very fine horse for her, Miss Maria felt as if Jack's punishment had come thus quickly in answer to her prayer. Besides this divine judgment, however, she must find some way of showing her displeasure to Jack, distinctly and personally—some pointed way.

The next morning she was still undecided when Jack came to ask for the key in order to clean the cellar; then an idea came to her. She preceded him to the cellar, and opening the door, showed him what was to be done, telling him to call her when he had finished; then, going up once more to the back piazza, she began to walk up and down with her hands clasped behind her, humming to herself. Up and down, up and down, shaking her head when she was not singing, and rehearsing the words she would presently say to Jack. Sometimes her eyes would flash as she remembered the provocation; then she would smile to think what a severe lesson

BALDY

she would teach him. Up and down, until Jack came to say that the work was finished; then she followed him once more to the cellar. She almost relented when she saw how carefully he had done his work; evidently he was trying to please her, but it would not be right to allow his behavior to pass unrebuked.

"It looks *very* well," she said, heartily—"very well indeed; it should always look so," she went on, while Jack rearranged some jars on one of the shelves; "and you should-never behave nor speak to me as you did yesterday, Jack, *never*; and now I shall give you a little time to think it over," and stepping out briskly, she shut the door, locking Jack into the cellar.

"Miss 'Ria!" he called.

"No, Jack; you deserve it."

"Lemme out, missis."

"No, Jack."

"Miss 'Ria, I is ole man, m'am."

"And should know better, Jack."

"Miss 'Ria, how long is you gwine to keep me yer?"

"Until you are in a better mind, Jack."

"Miss 'Ria, is you gwine tell Kizzy? Miss 'Ria, if you tell Kizzy, m'am, I gwine to lick um, sho. I'll be 'bleeged to lick dat gal if you tell um dis t'ing." His voice was rising.

"I shall not tell Kizzy," Miss Maria promised. Then she went up-stairs, and resumed her walk up and down the piazza.

Jack meanwhile, sitting on a box in the cellar,

BALDY

pondered the situation. That his mistress had outwitted him was very clear, and he rubbed his head in wonder.

"Miss 'Ria is sma't," he said, at length. "I nebber know say Miss 'Ria is sma't es dis. She ketch me in dis trap same liker fox. I nebber t'ink say Miss 'Ria would do sicher t'ing. White people is sma't, dat is de Lawd's trute. En awl my Mawsa chilluns is sma't, but I nebber know say Miss 'Ria is *dis* tricky—nebber. En if dat nigger Kizzy ebber know dis t'ing, I'll be 'bleeged to lick um, en no mistake. She'll know what she laugh at when I done wid um. Please Gawd dat gal 'll laugh out de turrer side she mout'. I dun'no what I married dat gal fuh anyhow. 'Lizer wuz a settled 'oman, en she nebber hab no swonger way, en I 'ain't good bury um 'fo' dis gal Kizzy fool me. But if she show she teet' 'bout *dis* t'ing, I'll bruck Miss 'Ria carriage whip on she back—*dat* I will—yes."

The cellar was dark and cool, and presently Jack's head went back against the wall, and a snore resounded through the room, so that he did not hear the little tumult that arose in the yard.

Miss Maria, however, held her breath for a moment. What was it the washerwoman was crying out? Fire! Good heavens! And there were the flames leaping out of the wash-house chimney.

"Kizzy!" she called. "Mingo! Moses! Lucy! Look! the wash-house is on fire! Bring water! Come and help Julia!"

BALDY

Down flew Kizzy ; out rushed the cook ; Moses and Mingo and half a dozen smaller darkies tumbled out of the stable.

"My Lawd ! it's ironin' day," cried Kizzy, "en dey ain't no water in de tubs. Wey is dat ole nigger Jack?"

"Uncle Jack in de cellar," cried the boys. Then all the negroes rushed to the cellar.

"Come out dey, you ole tarrypin!" Kizzy called. "Enty you know say missis house is bunnin' down? Come out, come out!"

Jack was dazed with sleep, and he realized only that his young wife was rattling the door.

"You wait till I git dat carriage whip ober yo' back," he retorted.

Kizzy rushed away. "Missis," she cried, breathlessly, "Jack in de cellar, m'am, en woan come out—no, m'am."

"Bring all the water down out of the house," Miss Maria commanded. "I will see to Jack." And trembling in every limb she went down to the cellar and unlocked the door. "Jack, Jack, come quickly, the wash-house is on fire ! Quickly ! Kizzy is up-stairs."

Jack needed no second bidding, but ran out instantly to the scene of the catastrophe. In a few moments, before Jack got there almost, it was all over, and Kizzy, rushing out breathlessly with two pitchers of water, found herself too late for anything but Jack's lofty sneers.

"Hollerin' en hollerin' 'bout one ole chimbly,"

BALDY

he said, "scarin' Miss 'Ria to de't' for nuttin. I know say Kizzy ain't hab nuttin but mout', but I t'ink say Sis Julia en Sis Lucy is hab eye—hab eye 'nough fuh see house from chimbly." He wondered how much they knew, these women. "I yeddy you holler so loud I t'ink say de chu'ch is bunnin'," he went on, "en come to see des one ole chimbly."

"Talk," Kizzy retorted—"talk. Dat's awl you kin do. Sleepin' in de cellar wid de do' lock. I gwine meck missis onderstan' 'bout dat—you wait."

"That will do, Kizzy," Miss Maria commanded. "Jack, some one is rattling at the stable-yard gate."

"Hullo, Jack! open this confounded gate."

"Dat's Mass Chahlie," and Jack ran to undo the fastenings.

All stood silent as Charles St. Clair rode in sitting sidewise on a barebacked horse.

"Here he is, Aunt 'Ria," he called, "as gentle as a lamb and as strong as an ox, and with a beautiful tail warranted to last. See?"

Jack's eyes were like saucers.

"Bring out Baldy, Jack," Mr. St. Clair went on, "and let Moses ride him over home. We'll send him out to the plantation until his tail grows out again."

Somehow it was not so hard to let Baldy go as Jack had imagined, and that afternoon as he drove Miss Maria down the bay behind the fine new horse he sat up very straight, looking proud-

BALDY

ly from side to side, while Miss Maria nodded gayly to the congratulations waved in handkerchiefs and hands, and given in "nods and becks and wreathed smiles."

THE END

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